



TODAY'S WEATHER

Hà Nội: cloudy, 10-15°C
Hải Phòng: cloudy, 10-13°C
Đà Nẵng: rainy, 17-23°C
HCM City: cloudy, 22-32°C

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President urges trade unions to protect workers

HÀ NỘI — President Trương Tấn Sang applauded the Việt Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) for its efforts to protect the rights of workers nationwide and raise awareness among workers about Government and Party policies at the 8th VGCL Executive Committee conference held yesterday.

Conference participants agreed that the labour confederation had successfully implemented all the resolutions passed at the 10th National Congress of Vietnamese Trade Unions. Trade unions at all levels had launched many diverse programmes to attract...

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Legislative party on China work trip

BEIJING — A delegation of the National Assembly led by Vice Chairwoman Tòng Thị Phóng are paying a working visit to China from at the invitation of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress.

Yesterday, Phóng had a meeting with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress Wu Bangguo.

At the meeting, Phóng said that the traditional friendship between Việt Nam and China was a valuable asset and that the Vietnamese Party, State and people were thankful to China for its great support of Việt Nam's national liberation, national construction and defence.

Wu Bangguo applauded the Vietnamese delegation's visit, saying that the visit...

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NA Chairman visits hydropower plant

SƠN LA — National Assembly Chairman Nguyễn Sinh Hùng met with engineers and workers yesterday at the Sơn La Hydropower Plant and emphasised the project's critical role in ensuring the nation's energy security and socio-economic development.

The meeting was part of Hùng's ongoing visit to the province. While there, he inspected the plant's operations and other components of the project.

Upon completion, the plant will operate six turbines with a combined capacity of 2,400 MW for an average electricity output of nearly 10 billion kWh a year.

Hùng congratulated the team for the recent launch of the fourth turbine and stressed...

CONTINUED PAGE 4



A corner of Đông Tây Boulevard. Covering over 21 kilometres, it connects eight districts in HCM City. — VNA/VNS Photo

State targets institutions, infrastructure, training

HÀ NỘI — One of the key goals of the Government this year is to create more favourable conditions for economic development by focusing on the three problem areas of infrastructure, institutions and human resources, Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng told a meeting of his cabinet

on Wednesday. Ministries, branches and localities should make their best efforts to removing State administrative barriers to attracting financial resources for development and to build strategies for such sectors such as steelmaking and cement...

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CONTINUED PAGE 2



A reporter takes a photo of icy weather on the top of Mẫu Sơn Mountain. — File Photo

Cold snap draws tourists to hills

HÀ NỘI — Icy weather brought winter chills to the Mẫu Sơn Tourism Area in mountainous Lạng Sơn Province yesterday morning after a severe cold spell hit northern Việt Nam, according to the provincial Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting Centre.

Temperatures dropped to minus 0.6 degrees at 7am and rain added to the severity of the weather, said Hà Văn Tiên, director of the provincial centre.

Day-time temperatures were no higher than 4-6 degrees Celsius in other areas in the province, he said.

Temperatures in the area were forecast to drop even lower during the next three days, said Tiên.

Despite the severe cold, numbers of young visitors higher than normal travelled to the Mẫu Sơn Tourism Area to see ice yesterday afternoon, reported a Vietnam News Agency...

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NATIONAL RECRUITMENT STABLE

Recruitment demand among enterprises in HCM City is not likely to increase in the first two months of this year.

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BUSINESS

PM NOD TO STRATEGY

A new import and export strategy has been approved to triple total export turnover by 2020, with a growth rate of 12 per cent a year.

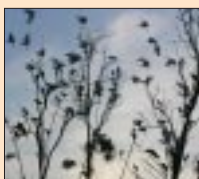
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LIFE&STYLE

STORKS ON PARADE

Bird lovers from Hà Nội can enjoy the sight of thousands of storks on an island just 70km away from the urban centre.

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VN-Index 364.48
HNX-Index 58.90

MARKET MOVES

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India, Việt Nam set out ambitious two-way trade plan

HCM CITY — Việt Nam and India target doubling bilateral trade to US\$7 billion by 2015, the visiting Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Human Resources Development Indian E. Ahamed has said.

Speaking to the media in HCM City yesterday after arriving on a three-day visit, he said trade and economic relations have been on the upswing between India and Việt Nam that have for long enjoyed close and cordial ties in many areas.

He is in Việt Nam on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, January 7, and the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the strategic partnership between the two nations.

Following India's adoption of its "Look East" policy, Việt Nam always figured high in its foreign policy priorities, and the two sides had exchanged many high-level visits in the last five years, he said.

Trade between the countries has surged in recent times from US\$200 million in 2000 to more than \$3.5 billion in 2011, after growing at over 48 per cent in the first 10 months.

Considering investment in Việt Nam as a first step to penetrating other ASEAN member countries, Ahamed said many Indian businesses have been showing increasing interest in many fields like farm produce processing, mineral oils, steel, black carbon, and IT training.

Indian investment in Việt Nam tops \$400 million and seemed set to continue to rise, he said.

Huỳnh Thành Lập, chairman of the Việt Nam-India Friendship Association, said despite the economic recession, last year's bilateral trade rose sharply.

Trade between HCM City and India had been worth \$592 million in the first nine months of last year, he said. — VNS

Effort needed to fight corruption

HCM CITY — The HCM City Party Committee and municipal administration need to enhance their leadership role in fighting corruption, a top official said on Wednesday.

The corruption fight also needs the participation of a vigilant citizenry and mass media, said Lê Hoàng Quân, Chairman of the HCM City People's Committee.

Addressing a conference held to review the city's anti-corruption efforts, he said, "Corruption is hard to discover if we lack exposure from citizens, the participation of mass media, tight supervision

and control."

Participants said corruption was highest in land management, construction investment, finance, banking, social and medical insurance.

In 2011, the number of bribery cases exposed had reduced over the previous years, but corruption happened at all administrative levels, they said.

Senior officials were the main subjects of major bribes, the conference heard.

"Therefore, to achieve high efficiency in combating corruption, we must have strong co-ordination between justice offices," said Lê Văn

Hùng, deputy director of the city's Inspections Department.

He also pointed out that piling up debt and tax fraud regarding land use in big projects was a new type of corruption. Last year, around VNĐ440 billion (US\$27.5 million) in land use taxes had not been paid.

Speakers at the conference also said that most cases of corruption were exposed based on information from outsiders.

"We highly appreciate the fact that HCM City has punished leaders of these units but the city must increase supervision and inspection," said

Nguyễn Văn Yên, deputy director of the southern office of the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption.

Yên said that even in instances where details of the graft case were clear, punishment was not commensurate with the crime.

Quản reiterated the need for a concerted effort to fight corruption and wastefulness.

"Everyone must strengthen plans to carry out the National Anti-Corruption Strategy until 2020. Shortening the time it takes to resolve corruption cases and retrieving all property are urgent jobs," he said. — VNS

Quality check



Inspectors from the Hà Nội Health Department check the quality of goods at Đông Xuân Market. The move aims to ensure food hygiene and safety during Tết (Lunar New Year). — NA/VNS Photo Thanh Tùng

State targets...

FROM PAGE 1

... and automobile production, Dũng said.

The Government would also continue to address the pressing issues of food hygiene and safety, crime and environmental pollution, he added.

The Ministry of Health was requested to review planning for the hospital system, formulate standards for regional hospitals, and to draw up plans to address overload at hospitals and ensure that the entire population would be covered by health insurance.

Dũng stressed that the Government was determined to get ministries, agencies, local governments and enterprises to strengthen management of natural resources exploitation to ensure sustainability, increase the

added-value of products and protect the environment.

He also urged the stronger efforts in the fight against corruption, with corruption cases to be dealt with transparently and publicly to raise public confidence in the State's leadership.

Minister of Planning and Investment Bùi Quang Vinh, Minister of Justice Hà Hùng Cường and State Bank of Việt Nam Governor Nguyễn Văn Bình all suggested that ministries and agencies spend more time drafting laws and ordinances, boosting administrative reform efforts, and promoting thrift and waste prevention.

Cường said that special attention this year needed to be paid to human resources training.

Addressing the draft plan to increase the efficiency of State-

owned enterprises, Dũng said restructuring of State-owned enterprises would help them perform their key role in promoting economic development and stabilising the economy. He requested relevant ministries and sectors to review the legal framework governing the operation of State economic groups.

The Ministry of Planning and Investment was also asked to collect comments from ministries and sectors and finalise a plan soon.

The plan needed to clearly define which sectors required the participation of a State-owned enterprise, Dũng said.

Meanwhile, enterprises in which the State held over 65 per cent of capital would continue to be ordered to focus on core lines of business while incrementally withdrawing investment from non-core businesses in such

fields as banking, insurance, and real estate development. The Government would also deal with loss-making enterprises.

The cabinet agreed to add another three months to the current corporate income tax extension for small- and medium-sized and labour-intensive enterprises. Under Prime Minister's Decision No 21/2011/QĐ-TTg issued back on April 6, 2011, those enterprises would have been required to pay corporate income taxes due for the first and second quarters of 2011 by this April 30 and July 30 at the latest.

The cabinet members also agreed yesterday on the need to expand export markets for the country's key commodities as well as to focus on providing more jobs for rural workers.

Wednesday's meeting also reviewed the Government performance in 2011. Dũng and

his ministers noted that the Government had strictly implemented Party policy and systematically carried out a wide range of measures to control inflation and maintain economic stability.

Inflation has slowed since the second quarter of last year, keeping overall inflation in 2011 to 18.13 per cent, while leading interest rates also showed signs of easing and exports saw a year-on-year increase of 33.3 per cent.

The trade deficit fell to 9.9 per cent of total export value, well within the National Assembly target of 18 per cent, while the State budget deficit accounted for just 4.9 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP).

Cabinet members also contributed opinions on the draft Government decree on gold trading. — VNS

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Cops, soldiers shot while revoking land

HẢI PHÒNG — Four policemen and two soldiers were shot during a land revocation operation yesterday morning in Tiên Lãng District's Vinh Quang Commune in northern Hải Phòng City.

As of 6pm yesterday, the alleged shooters were still on the run. Hải Phòng Police have mobilised additional forces to continue the search.

The victims, including head of the district's police department Phạm Văn Mãi, suffered serious injuries on different parts of their bodies.

Two have been transferred to central hospitals in Hà Nội for more advanced treatment while the rest are being treated at the local Việt Tiệp Hospital.

Yesterday morning, the officers and soldiers showed up at the ward near Rộc Drainage with local authorities to force the current residents out of the area.

The land, which is primarily being used for aquatic farming and growing orchards, was being rented

by 41-year-old Đào Văn Vươn.

The lease had expired and Vươn had failed to pay the associated land tax for a long time, which prompted the local authorities to revoke the land.

During the operation, a secret team went in on an advance mission but as it moved in closer to the area, a home-made mine suddenly exploded, leaving two of the police officers unconscious.

For the safety of the group, Mãi led another team to approach Vươn's house to call for him to give up and hand over any weapons.

When the team got close to the house, Vươn and his accomplices suddenly pointed a sawed-off shotgun (s) from inside and fired at the officers.

This was the second incident of officers being shot at on duty in just four days.

On Monday, a policeman was shot to death and another was seriously injured while chasing a suspect vehicle on Bình Bridge. — VNS

HCM City to crack down on diseases

HCM CITY — The HCM City Department of Health will continue to take measures against the spread of diseases like dengue fever, hand-foot-mouth disease, flu, chicken pox and rubella in the first months of this year.

The department's Medicine Centre has been tasked with guiding health centres at district level in carrying out more effective prevention work.

At a workshop yesterday, Dr Nguyễn Đắc Thọ, deputy director of the centre, asked participants to focus on kindergartens and schools in order to prevent the HFMD from spreading again at the beginning of this year.

If the prevention work were carried out well in kindergartens and schools, the number of patients contracting the disease would reduce, he said.

The hand-foot and mouth disease spread for a prolonged period last year, with 12,657 people contracting the disease, 30 of whom died. This compared to just 3,621 HFMD patients and one fatality in 2010, he added.

While the number of HFMD patients has reduced

of late, it was still higher than the average of the previous four years.

Thọ said the spraying of chemicals to destroy mosquitoes should be carried out regularly in order to prevent an increase in patients with dengue fever.

The centre's report showed that 12,477 patients were infected with dengue fever in 2011, an increase of 914 compared to 2010. Of these, 11 died, more than five times the figure in 2010.

In general, the number of patients with dengue fever decreased last December, but the disease was showing an upward trend in the last week of the month. Most of the new cases were in the districts 8, 6, 1, Tân Bình, and Bình Tân, Thọ said.

The centre is strengthening efforts to ensure timely discovery of other diseases that occur during cold weather, like flu, chicken-pox and rubella, he said.

"It will also step up inspections and management of slaughter-houses and places where poultry is sold in order to prevent possible bird flu outbreaks," he added. — VNS

Deputy PM asks for petrol checks in wake of auto fires

HÀ NỘI — Deputy Prime Minister Hoàng Trung Hải on Wednesday asked the Ministry of Science and Technology for a report on recently conducted petrol inspections.

A number of automobile and motorbike fires had occurred over the past few months, and one of the reasons for the fires was reported to have been substandard petrol, according to an official dispatch signed by Deputy PM Hải.

Deputy director of the Ministry of Science and Technology's Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality Trần Văn Vinh said that the inspections had detected four petrol samples in HCM City that contained levels of methanol that exceeded industry standards.

Methanol cost only half the price of petrol and many petrol outlets combined the two in order to boost profits.

However, methanol can erode the metal in vehicle engines and consequently was blamed for the recent fires, according to the website physics.hus.edu.vn.

One of the four petrol samples contained 4.3 per cent of methanol whereas the regulated amount was 3 per cent, said Vinh.

Vinh also said that the Mai Dịch petrol station in Hà Nội was closed at the end of last month after a petrol sample was found to contain 15.3 per cent methanol.

On Wednesday, the deputy chairman of the

HCM City People's Committee, Lê Mạnh Hà, handed out fines from VNĐ10-30 million (US\$475-1,420) to three petrol trading enterprises for substandard petrol.

A total of 42 automobile and motorbike fires broke out in Hà Nội from December 1, 2010 to December 18, 2011, according to statistics from the city's Department of Fire Fighting and Prevention Police.

The domestic press also reported 89 cases of vehicle fires last year across the country, of which 50 automobile fires and 39 motorbike fires killed two people and injured two others.

The causes of 72 per cent of the motorbike fires and 50 per cent of the automobile fires are unknown. — VNS

Đà Lạt man hopeful after removal of 90kg tumour



Doctors examine Hải's 90-kg tumour yesterday in HCM City. — VNA/VNS Photo Phuong Vy

Văn Đạt

HCM CITY — A 32-year-old man from Đà Lạt underwent an operation yesterday to have a 90kg tumour removed from his leg.

The operation for Nguyễn Duy Hải was done at the France-Việt Nam Hospital in HCM City by a team of surgeons led by American doctor McKay McKinnon.

His mother, 61-year-old Nguyễn Thị Cho Con, said Hải was transferred to the FV hospital on December 27 from the HCM City Tumor Hospital, where the operation was first scheduled to be conducted on November 18. The venue was changed later because of better facilities at the France-Việt Nam hospital.

"I sit here and pray for my son now. I believe in the doctor," she said, staying away from a big screen that showed the operation live.

According to the hospital, Hải was in good health and no longer suffered lung problems that had been noticed during the time he was at the HCM City Tumor Hospital.

During the operation, Hải would need between transfusions of 15 to 25 blood units, doctors have estimated. They also said that after the surgery, he would be closely monitored in an intensive care unit for seven days. They are hoping his heart and lungs resume functioning normally 10 days after the surgery.

At 11 a.m. yesterday, the hospital announced that the first phase of surgery had been successful.

Fourteen years ago, Hải's tumour, then weighing 25 kilograms, was operated upon and removed at the Lâm Đồng General Hospital, but it recurred again and continued

to grow to its present weight of 90 kilograms. His family was too poor to afford another operation after the amputation in 1997 failed to stop the growth.

After local media released pictures of his tumour, doctors from the HCM City Tumor Hospital visited his house. They said he was suffering from a genetic disorder called Von Recklinghausen disease, which caused nerve tissues to grow into tumours. His mother suffered from the same condition as well, doctors said, but has not suffered extreme symptoms.

A film crew from California-based Morningstar Entertainment has been covering the operation. It had recently filmed Hải's case in Đà Lạt. The company is producing a documentary on the tumour and the surgery to be aired on Discovery Channel. — VNS

BRIEFS

Biology student wins Eureka research prize

HCM CITY — The special Eureka 2011 Award for scientific research was awarded to a student from the HCM City University of Science's biology faculty yesterday.

Nguyễn Thị Mai received VNĐ15 million (US\$715) and a merit certificate from the municipal People's Committee for her research project on Parkinson's disease.

A total of 63 prizes were handed out.

30 tonnes of beef seized in Hà Nội

HÀ NỘI — Hà Nội Market Watch seized nearly 30 tonnes of beef of unknown origin in Bình Minh Ward in Thanh Oai District on Wednesday.

Those in charge of the meat had no quarantine certificates. Most of the meat smelled stale and police destroyed it.

Nguyễn Văn Tâm, owner of the meat, said he collected most of the meat in slaughterhouses in the district and carried it for sale in southern provinces.

High blood pressure sufferers go untreated

HÀ NỘI — Việt Nam National Heart Association's website vnha.org.vn says about 90 per cent of people diagnosed with hypertension, or high blood pressure as it is commonly known, receive no treatment.

This is despite the fact that about 25 per cent of adults have the ailment, which can be life threatening.

The website was designed to enhance people's sense of preventing from hypertension.

HCM City sets up tourism police force

HCM CITY — HCM City will appoint Tourism Police to look after the security of travellers in the region, according to the HCM City People's Committee on Wednesday.

City police will also publish a hotline for reporting crimes or trying to prevent them.

The HCM City Department of Transport will co-ordinate with other authorities to set up transport safety boards to deal with drivers violating the rules.

Stream blocked at reservoir

QUẢNG BÌNH — The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the province blocked off a stream yesterday so work could begin on Thác Chuối Reservoir in Bố Trạch District's Phú Định Commune.

The reservoir will have an estimated capacity of 32 million cubic metres and total investment of VNĐ367 billion (US\$17.5 million). — VNS

Taxi bans on crowded streets only a partial fix

Last week, *Việt Nam News* asked for readers' opinions on Hà Nội's decision to ban taxis from certain crowded streets during peak hours before and after Tết in the hope that it might lessen traffic congestion.

Here are some of the replies:

Khut Sokhoeun, Cambodian, Phnom Penh

Last year, I travelled to Hà Nội several times and noticed the differences between traffic there and in Phnom Penh.

My first impression was of the large numbers of motorbikes and taxis - and the busy roads. Many people drive motorbikes, but only some of them drive cars. Because of the high price of cars in Việt Nam, taxis play an important role.

In contrast, in Phnom Penh, the number of cars and motorbikes are similar. However, people in your city seem to have more respect for traffic laws than those in the Cambodian capital. But, during rush hour, the roads became busier, just like in Phnom Penh.

One thing I noticed in Việt Nam was that the taxis drove fast and kept blowing their horns, why. I don't know, because no one seemed to take any notice. Taxis in Phnom Penh are slower but the road death toll is still high. Most of those killed are on motorbikes.

In Phnom Penh, taxis are less popular than motorbikes and tuk tuks. But in Hà Nội, taxis are a main means of transport, so I don't think they should be banned, especially during

big holidays.

Talbot Phipps-Ockington, British, Hà Nội

Well I ride a motorbike, which I find convenient and easy. I do occasionally catch a cab, but I have been ripped off so many times, I do so only as a last resort. I also think taxi drivers are a menace on the roads.

They are rude, and aggressive drivers, so banning them from a few streets in the Old Quarter, even for just a few days, I think is a good thing.

Personally, I think they should pedestrianise the whole of the Old Quarter, or follow the example set by London and New York City and make drivers pay a congestion charge for driving into the area.

The Old Quarter is small, and foreign visitors certainly would not balk at having to walk a few more yards to find a taxi, and it would make strolling along the narrow streets in the city centre far more pleasurable.

If pedestrianising the Old Quarter inconveniences a few taxi drivers, so be it. There are far too many taxis plying the roads of the capital as it is. Like I said, they drive aggressively, hoot their horns all the time and are a menace to other road users.

Only the other day a friend of mine's wife was knocked over by a taxi that swerved in front of her to pick up a fare. After knocking her off her bike, and dislocating her arm, he sped off. The man who had hailed the taxi ended up taking her to hospital. And I have heard far sadder

YOUR SAY

You Asked, published on Tuesdays, gives readers an opportunity to ask *Việt Nam News* questions which are then responded to each week.

Your Say, published every Friday, enables readers to express opinions on a topic or issue raised by the editor.

According to a Government plan approved by Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng earlier this month, cash payments will make up less than 11 per cent of all transactions in Việt Nam by the end of 2015, down from the current figure of 14 per cent.

The plan also seeks to double the number of people with bank accounts to 40 per cent of the population over the next four years, improve the transparency of transactions in Việt Nam and reduce cash-related risks such as robbery or damage to currency. The move is also expected to improve the efficiency of the country's banking system and state management.

However, these measures must overcome the country's cash culture and inadequate infrastructure and technology to reduce the amount of cash payments.

As someone travelling in Việt Nam or working here, do you find it inconvenient to carry and pay with cash for most transactions? What do you think about the cash culture of Vietnamese people? What efforts do you think Việt Nam could initiate to reduce risks associated with non-cash transactions?

Emails should be sent to: OPINION@VNSMAIL.COM - or by fax to (84-4) 3 933 2311. Letters can be sent to The Editor, *Việt Nam News*, 11 Trần Hưng Đạo Street, Hà Nội. Replies to this week's question must be received by Thursday morning, January 12.

tales than that.

So all things considered, I am strongly in favour of barring taxis from the designated streets in the Old Quarter.

Nguyễn Thu Hoà, Vietnamese, Hà Nội

We have a two-year-old child and I would have to stay at home during Tết if taxis were banned from reaching Tây Sơn Street. Oh, no! I don't wish that, because it's impossible for me to take my child out by motorbike in such chilly weather. What should I do now? Buy a car? No, it's far beyond my affordability.

Ahh, I've got it. I will hire a four-seater car during the holiday. It would not be too expensive and it would be very convenient for my

family. Most importantly, I suppose, it is not a taxi.

While this may be my solution, I still strongly oppose the taxi ban. It does nothing but causes more trouble for residents. There are a lot of shopping centres and markets in my neighbourhood such as Parkson, Trần Anh and Pico. Thousands of customers will have to use their private vehicles to get there instead of taxis as usual. The number of vehicles will double or treble. So where should they park? This surely will cause more congestion.

Moreover, if I and other residents wish to catch a taxi from some place to home, we will have to take a long walk because taxis may have to stop far from

my neighbourhood. It's not fair!

Banning is not the solution. It would be much better if more policemen and volunteers were allocated to hot traffic spots during the Tết holiday to direct traffic and make sure drivers obey traffic rules.

Ploenpote Atthakor, Thai, Hà Nội

Banning taxis from busy streets during Tết seems to be a good solution for Hà Nội and other big cities, but what happens if someone in these banned streets, a pregnant woman who's going to give birth for instance, needs a car to the hospital?

How could a big ambulance squeeze into a crowded street to pick you up? Impossible! A motorbike taxi? No, they're just too dangerous. Walking the whole long street to get a bus? I don't think the proposal is serious.

If taxis are banned at certain times and in certain areas, there must be other means of transport - and public transport in Việt Nam remains limited. Authorities should take note of this.

In Thailand, taxis are a common means of transport and are rarely banned except for walking streets.

Nick Đỗ, Vietnamese, Hà Nội

As an everyday taxi-hailer, the news about taxis being banned from some of Hà Nội's main streets during the Tết holiday has me worried.

Walking has never been convenient in this town, and *xe ôm*'s, everyone's favourite means to travel

around, has become unreasonably pricey. There are some amazingly cheap and reliable taxi operators in Hà Nội, especially Thanh Nga, the taxi company that I actually miss every time I leave town. Now it's the holiday season, when you actually have to move around a lot to do all the necessary shopping and make a lot of visits. And they ban taxis from main streets!

It's like they're telling everyone who doesn't own a private vehicle to stay away from downtown. Why?

Whatever the reason they have for this ban, I still believe that it's SUPER unfair to ban only taxis and nothing else, like the taxis are the only ones to blame for all the traffic problems in this town. Yes, many taxi drivers are careless, but so are most of the drivers of other cars in this town, where I have learnt that you can buy your driving license, or in fact, drive a car without a license as most of my friends who own a car do. Don't even mention the motorbike drivers, who don't have any idea about things called "lanes". The traffic in Hà Nội is a mess and instead of giving out short-term bans and such things, which I believe will solve nothing but just make people's life a little harder over a short period of time, we need SERIOUS long-term plans that, first and foremost, help raise the awareness of all drivers about traffic, road manners and safety. And I really hope that the Government will eventually understand that when you have the power to control, then use it wisely. — VNS

Readers' comments are welcome. Please send your email to opinion@vnsmail.com. *Việt Nam News* reserves the right to edit all letters. Thank you!

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President urges...

FROM PAGE 1

... workers in all sectors and accurately reflected their concerns and aspirations to the Party and Government, they said.

Members also discussed the problems and challenges facing workers nationwide. In some sectors, they have not been able to catch up with new technologies and improve working methods

according to international standards. In many areas, workers are also subjected to inadequate working and living conditions and the relationships between employees and employers continue to pose many problems.

President Sang instructed the unions at all levels to con-

tinue studying and implementing all Party resolutions related to the working class. They must also work harder to protect the rights of members, workers and contribute to building Government and Party policies that could further benefit the working class, he said. — VNS

NA Chairman...

FROM PAGE 1

... the important role the Sơn La Hydropower Plant played in supplying electricity for socio-economic development, helping to control floods in the rainy season and supplying water for the northern delta in the dry season.

The final two turbines will be put into operation in 2012, three years earlier than scheduled.

On behalf of the Party and Government, Hùng also praised the workers, engineers and staff for their efforts and offered his wish for a prosperous Tết holiday. He also applauded local authorities and residents for resettling in new areas to benefit the project. — VNS

Legislative party...

FROM PAGE 1

... would further deepen the relationship between the two countries.

He said that China attached importance to developing the traditional friendship and comprehensive co-operation with Việt Nam for the benefits of the two peoples and for peace and stability in the region.

The two sides agreed that it was necessary to intensify the Việt Nam-China comprehensive strategic co-operative partnership based on the common per-

ceptions of the two countries' high-ranking leaders.

They asserted that co-operative relations between the two countries' legislative bodies should be strengthened through further promoting the exchange of visits, information and experience between the two peoples and mutual support at multilateral forums.

Phong will hold talks with Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress Lu Yongxiang today as part of her visit from January 4-8. — VNS

Recruitment demand in City stable for now

HCM CITY—Recruitment demand among companies and enterprises in HCM City is not likely to increase in the first two months of this year compared to the same period last year, according to the city's Centre for Labour Market Information and Human Resource Forecasting.

At this time of the year, especially January, companies and enterprises focus on providing bonuses and other incentives in order to keep their employees working for them after Tết, said Trần Anh

Tuấn, deputy director of the centre.

"Workers tend to move to companies and enterprises that offer better salaries and perks if their employers do not pay attention to their bonus and allowances at this time," Tuấn said.

The centre estimated that around 20 per cent of the employees of enterprises in the city would quit their jobs after Tết and find employment elsewhere, he said. This would lead to a shortage of labour around

that time, he added.

The report said companies and enterprises were always looking to hire and retain high performance employees, and the latter have particularly been in demand around this time.

According to the centre, nearly 45,000 employees are needed in the city in first two months of this year. Most of the available jobs are likely to be in the textile, footwear, construction, mechanics, and electrical and electronics industries. — VNS



Employers interview candidates at a recent recruitment fair in HCM City. — VNA/VNS Photo Phương Vy

Cold snap draws...

FROM PAGE 1

...correspondent in the province.

Fortunately, icy weather did not disrupt the daily lives of local residents too much thanks to prompt action from the local authorities, although local primary and secondary schools have given students time off due to the cold snap, he said.

The daytime low fell to 8 degrees Celsius, one de-

gree lower than Wednesday, and a high of 14 degrees Celsius in Hà Nội yesterday, according to the National Centre for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting.

This is the most severe cold spell to hit the north since the beginning of the season. Temperatures are predicted to remain low for at least the next three days.

The Hà Nội Education and Training Department has instructed education and

training offices to adjust school hours to keep children from having to attend school early in the morning when conditions are especially cold.

Schools have also been asked to ensure classrooms have proper windows and doors as well as lighting systems.

Primary students are allowed to stay at home on days when temperatures drop to below 10 degrees Celsius while secondary students do not have to attend school if the temperature drops below

7 degrees Celsius.

Weather updates are available on Việt Nam Television's VTV1 at 6am everyday.

Nguyễn Thị Hằng, a kindergarten principal in Hà Nội's Ba Đình District, said 170 out of their 650 students had not attended classes since Tuesday due to the cold spell.

The situation is the same in Hà Nội's outskirts.

"Only 137 students went to school on Wednesday out of a total of 560," said Hoàng Nhật Lệ, princi-

pal of Tân Viên Kindergarten in mountainous Ba Vi District.

"We have adjusted school hours and provided blankets, warm water and slippers to keep students warm," she said.

Doctors at the Bach Mai Hospital Paediatrics Department and the National Hospital of Tropical Diseases said they were seeing the same number of children and elderly during the cold spell as normal.

However, doctors advised people not to warm

themselves up by using charcoal and coal stoves in small rooms.

They added that elderly people should not exercise too early in the morning or bathe and shampoo their hair at the same time.

Shops selling clothes, scarves and heating equipment, including electric blankets, heating fans and heating bags, are busier than normal along Bạch Mai, Huế, and Hai Bà Trưng streets, although their prices are 10-20 per cent higher than last year. — VNS

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WORLD HIGHLIGHTS

FRANCE

ROUEN – French oil workers' unions have threatened a national refinery blockade over the shutdown of a Petroplus facility hit by a credit freeze.

FINLAND

HELSINKI – Finland plans to close down its embassy in Pakistan during 2012 due to budgetary constraints, the Finnish foreign ministry has said.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

UNITED NATIONS – Israel has complained about a lack of reaction from the UN Security Council to a series of rocket attacks on the Jewish state from militants in Gaza.

JERUSALEM – Israelis and Palestinians were downbeat about peace prospects on Wednesday, a day after the two sides held their first face-to-face talks since September 2010 at a meeting in Amman.

US

NEW YORK – The former head of defunct British tabloid the *News of the World* is taking the helm of the *New York Daily News*, the longtime rival of Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post*, reports said on Wednesday.

WASHINGTON – The United States has said it has taken no decision to release prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay in order to boost reconciliation talks with the Taliban.

BRAZIL

BRASILIA – Brazil last year recorded the second-largest dollar inflow in its history, US\$65.2 billion, up 168 per cent from 2010, with most in the form of foreign investment, the Central Bank has said.

PARAGUAY

ASUNCION – Paraguay has declared a state of emergency in a northern province to deal with an outbreak of hoof-and-mouth disease, as neighbouring Uruguay and Brazil stepped up border controls to prevent the spread of the disease. — Agencies

Merkel's FDP allies in fight for political survival

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition partners, the Free Democrats, open a party conference split over euro policy and threatened with extinction from parliament in 20 months unless their new leader can reverse their fortunes.

FDP leader and German Economy Minister Philipp Roesler was under huge pressure to rally the party at the Stuttgart gathering yesterday and today and finally assert his authority eight months after taking the helm.

The pro-business FDP has been languishing below the critical 5 per cent threshold required to enter parliament since September 2011, after sliding from a record 14.6 per cent of the vote in the last fed-

eral election in 2009.

Continuing dismal support for the party could force Merkel, who has signalled she wants to run for a third term in the next federal election in autumn 2013, to search for another coalition partner.

"For the first time the survival of the FDP is in question. We have never had a case where the party has been below 5 per cent for so long," said pollster Manfred Guellner. The party was last above 5 per cent in March 2011.

A survey by his Forsa polling institute for *Stern* magazine published on Wednesday put the FDP, traditional kingmakers in German politics, on 3 per cent, up slightly from December's trough of 2 per cent.

"We need to put on our

combat trousers and stop focusing on ourselves," Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger told *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper.

While trying to play down the conference's significance, she added it was a chance for Roesler to lay out the FDP's aims.

The party's popularity has slumped amid disappointment at its failure to deliver promised tax cuts, and a lack of trust in its gaffe-prone leaders.

Roesler, 38, was supposed to breathe new dynamism into the party but has looked out of his depth as leader and failed to crush a rebellion by eurosceptics in his party who mounted an internal referendum last month on euro policy. — **REUTERS**

Scandal-hit German president still hopeful

BERLIN — Embattled German President Christian Wulff said on Wednesday he wanted to stay in office despite a mounting series of scandals weighing on him and his ally, Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"I am pleased to assume my responsibilities (as president). I took them on for a five-year term," Wulff said in a televised interview amid a growing chorus of calls for his resignation.

He added that he hoped by the end of the term in 2015 "to have a record showing I was a good and successful president".

Wulff, 52, landed in hot water last month when the powerful daily *Bild* reported that he had concealed a home loan at an advantageous interest rate he accepted from the wife of a tycoon friend while premier of Lower Saxony

state. When opposition state deputies asked him whether he had business ties to the tycoon or any firms connected with him, Wulff had kept quiet.

This week it emerged that Wulff had called *Bild*'s editor-in-chief Kai Diekmann one day before the story's publication and left a blistering voicemail message threatening him with "war" if he went ahead with the report.

Meanwhile another publication, *Welt am Sonntag*, said one of its reporters had been summoned to the presidential palace for a dressing-down over another article about Wulff's strained relationship with his half-sister.

Wulff said in the interview on Wednesday that the call to Diekmann had been a "serious mistake" that was "unworthy" of a president and for which he had already apologised. — **AFP**

Cuba approves housing subsidy

HAVANA — Cubans who cannot afford building materials can now seek a subsidy to build or repair their homes, officials have said, a programme meant to cut government spending and start reducing the country's massive housing shortage.

The programme — like the government's recent announcement that all Cubans in this centrally planned economy no longer earn the same salary — is part of President Raul Castro's new acknowledgement that all Cubans do not have identical economic needs.

The programme aims "to eliminate undeserved gratuities and excessive subsidies, keeping in mind the need to assist people in financial need and not subsidise construction supplies generally", the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma* said on Wednesday.

It does not state an economic need level, and takes effect on January 15.

Raul Castro earlier had tried to stimulate output of building supplies themselves, and allowed them to be sold outside the state monopoly.

And while cutting state payrolls, he has allowed more categories of self employment including bricklayers, plumbers and electricians among others, for Cuban workers. — **AFP**

EU, US tighten sanctions noose on Iran

TEHRAN — The European Union and the United States have tightened the sanctions noose around Iran, with diplomats in Brussels saying a preliminary agreement had been reached on an EU embargo of Iranian oil.

Washington hailed the agreement, saying it was "the result of lots of consultations" with its EU allies. It announced that US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner was to go to China next

week to discuss "co-ordination" over new US sanctions against Iran's central bank.

The West's double squeeze on Iran adds to existing sanctions imposed over Tehran's nuclear programme that is increasingly destabilising the Islamic republic oil-dependent economy.

Iran's fury at the moves being made against it was apparent in threats this week it made against the US navy.

On Wednesday the country grappled with turmoil on its domestic currency market, with the authorities trying to shore up the rial after it fell to an all-time low on Monday following the new US sanctions targeting the central bank.

The West is attempting to deal harder blows to Iran by blocking much of its oil exports and stopping other nations dealing with Iran's central bank, which proc-

esses most oil sales.

Oil revenues account for 80 per cent of Iran's foreign currency earnings.

Although Tehran has said it will have no trouble to continue selling its oil, mainly to China, India and other Asian clients, the West intends to see those sales made riskier and subject to hefty discounts.

In Brussels, a diplomat said "there is an agreement in principle to forge ahead"

with an EU embargo on Iranian oil.

But "there is still a lot of work" to agree on its timing for a foreign ministers' meeting on January 30, he added.

Earlier on Wednesday, China said it opposed "unilateral" sanctions against Iran, after US President Barack Obama signed into law the new measures targeting the Iran's central bank. — **AFP**

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Arab League turns to UN for help in Syria

DAMASCUS — The Arab League has turned to the United Nations for help after admitting “mistakes” in its Syria monitoring mission, which has come in for withering criticism for its failure to stem bloodletting.

Meanwhile, Jeffrey Feltman, the US assistant secretary of state for Near East Affairs, is to hold talks with the Arab League about the Syrian crisis in Cairo yesterday, amid mounting frustration over the unrelenting violence.

His meeting comes a day after President Bashar al-Assad’s regime accused the United States of “gross interference” in Arab affairs and an “unjustified attempt to internationalise” the issue.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh

“We are coming here [the UN], because this is the first time the Arab League is involved in sending monitors, and there are some mistakes”

SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSEM AL-THANI, QATARI PRIME MINISTER

Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani, who heads an Arab League task force on Syria, on Wednesday discussed the deadly protest crackdown with UN leader Ban Ki-moon in New York, Kuwait’s KUNA news agency reported.

“We are coming here for technical help and to see the experience the UN has, because this is the first time the Arab League is involved in sending monitors, and there are some mistakes,” said

Sheikh Hamad, quoted by KUNA. A UN spokesman said only that Ban and the sheikh “discussed practical measures by which the United Nations could support the observer mission of the Arab League in Syria”.

The sheikh would not say what mistakes had been made. Syrian opposition groups say the monitors have been kept under too tight a rein in the country and that hundreds of people have been killed

despite the presence of the observers.

“This is the first experience for us. I said we have to evaluate what sorts of mistakes” have been made, said the Qatari prime minister.

“There is no doubt for me. I can see there are mistakes, but we went there not to stop the killing but to monitor.”

The prime minister said it was President Assad’s job to stop the killings, which the UN last month put at more than 5,000 since March.

The monitors had done their best, Sheikh Hamad was quoted as saying, but they do not have enough experience.

That is why “we need the ex-

perience from the UN and we need to see how we can evaluate if they go back, how they will work.”

Sheikh Hamad said that if the observer mission goes back, the Syrian government must keep its “commitments” under the accord made with the 22-member Arab bloc.

Arab League ministers are to discuss the mission at a meeting on Saturday.

Sheikh Hamad said ministers would evaluate the crisis and “we will see whether we can continue the mission or not and how we can continue the mission. But we need to hear the reports of the people who have been on the ground first.” — AFP

Iraq blasts kill at least 61 in Shiite enclaves

BAGHDAD — A spate of attacks against Shiite pilgrims and neighbourhoods in Iraq killed at least 61 people yesterday as the country grapples with a weeks-long political row that has stoked sectarian tensions.

The violence, which wounded more than 100, was the worst since 67 people died on December 22, soon after the crisis erupted when Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi was charged with running a hit squad US troops pulled out.

Unlike the December attacks, which mostly hit a variety of neighbourhoods in Baghdad, yesterday’s violence focused solely on Shiites.

It was quickly condemned by Iraq’s parliament speaker Osama al-Nujaifi, a Sunni, as well as Iraq’s Shiite-majority neighbour Iran.

“Political leaders fight each other for power, and we pay the price,” said Ahmed Khalaf, a labourer who was near the site of attacks in the north Baghdad

neighbourhood of Sadr City.

“How is it our fault if Hashemi is wanted, or someone else is wanted? Why should we pay instead of them?”

The worst incident saw at least 38 people killed by a suicide attack on the outskirts of the southern city of Nasiriyah as pilgrims were walking to the shrine city of Karbala for Arbacen commemorations.

“Hospitals in Nasiriyah have received 38 killed and 68

wounded,” said Hadi Badr al-Riyahi, head of the provincial health department in Dhi Qar, of which Nasiriyah is the capital.

Arbacen marks 40 days after the Ashura anniversary commemorating the slaying of Imam Hussein, one of Shiite Islam’s most revered figures, by the armies of the Caliph Yazid in 680 AD.

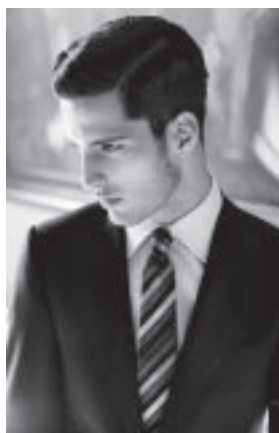
Five bomb attacks also struck two Shiite neighbourhoods in northern Baghdad, killed 23 people and wounded dozens more.

In Kadhimiyah, car bombs exploded at around 9:00 am (0600 GMT) at adjoining intersections, said officials from the interior and defence ministries.

The blasts killed 14 people and wounded 37 others, the defence official said, while the interior ministry source put the toll at 15 dead and 31 wounded.

Several nearby businesses and shops, as well as the facade of a newly built hotel, were badly damaged. — AFP

CANALI THE LUXURY OF A MADE-TO-MEASURE SUIT



LUALA is proudly hosting “CANALI - Made to Measure” event, with the presence of Mr. Giorgio Ascheri CANALI’s master tailor from Italia, from Jan 13 to 16, 2012. This is an exclusive program for only 30 first registered customers.

“Made to Measure” has been familiar in Vietnamese culture. It is quite easy to find a “suit making store” in Hanoi. However, in this very special time of the year, LUALA wishes to bring a true Italian value to its customers by inviting a master tailor from one of the most prestigious brand of Italia CANALI.

A Made to Measure suit offers every man the chance to express himself to the full, to create his own look and to communicate his personality through the choice of cut, fabric and color. Every stage in the made to measure process is the result of meticulous attention to detail and professional skills of Canali tailors. They draw on their extensive experience and intimate knowledge of the brand to take measurements and advise customers to ensure that the end result is worthy of Canali’s extremely high standards of style and perfection.

The creation of a Made to Measure suit begins with the choice of the model and cut that best suits the customer’s physique. During this stage, the expert eye of our tailors plays a key role in ensuring that the final product is perfect. Tailor and customer work together as a team in order to find the finest style for the customer’s

personality based entirely on dialogue and trust.

The ensuing relationship can be compared to that between two musicians who collaborate on the composition of a piece of music. Beat after beat they combine notes, then listen to them to see if they form a pleasing melody, discussing, changing and approving them by common agreement as they go. A Canali Made to Measure suit is created in the same way, where every measurement and detail are decided together by common accord, based on the tastes and needs of the customer, with the support and professionalism of our master tailors.

Customers can choose from an evergreen selection but the thing that makes Canali Made to Measure Service’s real special is the opportunity to choose from 200 new fabrics which change each season. On the top of that huge range, for real expert people, Canali propose, often exclusively for its client, super fine fabrics as 220’s, 230’s and vicuna all of them real precious, comfortable and characterized by a light wearability.

In January 2012, Mr. Giorgio Ascheri, Canali master tailor from Italy will visit LUALA, Hanoi from 13th to

16th to help Vietnamese customers select from the vast range of luxurious fabrics and prepare the best suit. By launching this Made-to-Measure event, LUALA hopes to bring a new shopping experience to Vietnamese customers. They can now truly feel exclusive, because they know they are buying a suit not just because of a label, logo or price, but because they fit them perfectly, a manufacture made just for him with precious fabrics. It’s an act through which they express their own culture and social status.

LUALA is a luxury concept where high fashion, art and lifestyle interact, with stores located at the hearts of Hanoi and Saigon, and the aim to provide customers with luxury international fashion brands such as Azzedine Alaïa, Dries van Noten, Elie Saab, Giuseppe Zanotti, Manolo Blahnik, Missoni, Vera Wang, Victoria Beckham, etc. Customers can easily select designs that suit their style, be it elegant, classic or modern, fashion-forward. LUALA identity includes understated luxury, elegant and charismatic.

Hotline for “CANALI Made to Measure” program: **0912 75 75 66**

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Source: Dat Xanh co. Ltd

Peruvians flock aboard Lima's first public trains

LIMA — After a 25-year delay, Lima — home to nearly a third of Peru's population — is getting its first low-cost mass public transportation system.

Thousands of customers flocked on Wednesday to the southernmost terminal of Lima's new electric train for a free ride downtown.

The train system began "pre-operational tests" this week, said Fernando Deustua, the manager of GyM Ferrovias, which operates the network.

Unlike other major regional cities like Santiago and Buenos Aires, Lima — one of the five most populous South American cities — does not have a subway. Instead the electric train is designed to operate above ground, much of it on an elevated track strong enough to withstand a 9 magnitude earthquake.

The 22-km trip from the working-class neighbourhood of Villa El Salvador to downtown takes 30 minutes, including stops along the way. The same trip in a vehicle usually takes two hours due to the city's heavy traffic.

The project, which cost more than US\$900 million, was built

with a 45 per cent investment from Brazil's Odebrecht and Peru's Grana y Montero corporations. The Peruvian state invested the rest. The project was kicked off in 1986 with a \$226 million investment co-financed by Italy.

The train began operations on Tuesday, surprising city residents who for years have driven under sections of the unused elevated track.

Construction began in 1986 during the first administration of president Alan Garcia. Over the years the project was paralysed due to a flurry of corruption charges — never confirmed — and shifting government priorities.

In the meantime, Lima's population ballooned from some 5 million to nearly 9 million today, and Peru's population rose to more than 29 million.

To solve the pressing public transportation problem, the government of president Alberto Fujimori in the 1990s allowed a free system of public transportation which resulted in swarms of privately owned minivans known locally as "combis" that can carry up to 15 passengers. — **AFP**

Piece of cake



Mexico City's mayor, Marcelo Ebrard, and his wife, Rosalinda Bueso, eat the traditional "Rosca de Reyes" -- a large ring-shaped bread roll baked for Epiphany -- in Mexico City, on Wednesday. The 720-m circumference "Rosca de Reyes", weighing 10 metric tons -- the world biggest -- was distributed among 500,000 people at Zocalo Square in Mexico City. — **AFP/VNA Photo**

Obama challenger withdraws

DES MOINES — Michele Bachmann announced on Wednesday that she is ending her bid for the Republican presidential nomination to challenge President Barack Obama after her last-place finish in the Iowa caucuses.

The conservative Minnesota congresswoman's decision, widely expected following her Iowa showing, leaves her supporters up for grabs by the other candidates, particularly former Pennsylvania Sen Rick Santorum, former House of Representatives speaker Newt

Gingrich and Texas Gov Rick Perry. "I have decided to stand aside," Bachmann said at a hastily arranged news conference, hours after the caucus results were announced. "I will not be continuing in this race for the presidency."

Her campaign manager, Keith Nahigian, said that Bachmann has "no time frame or person" in mind for an endorsement of another candidate.

Bachmann said she had no regrets and will continue to fight for the causes she emphasised

during the campaign.

It has been a long, deep slide for the congresswoman, who enjoyed a high point in her campaign when she won a Republican straw poll in Iowa in August. But her campaign steadily lost support since then, beginning with Perry's entry into the race on the day of her straw poll win.

Bachmann, 55, had told a small group of supporters on Tuesday night that she was staying in the race as the only true conservative who can defeat Obama. — **AP**

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TODAY IN HISTORY

- 1818** Dominions of Holkar in India are annexed with Rajput states and come under British protection.
- 1838** Samuel Morse first publicly demonstrates his telegraph, in Morristown, New Jersey.
- 1839** British forces capture Aden, Yemen.
- 1912** New Mexico becomes 47th US state.
- 1942** The Pan American Airways Pacific Clipper arrives in New York after making the first round-the-world trip by a commercial airplane.
- 1992** Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his supporters shoot their way out of their stronghold and speed away.
- 1995** Iran's air force commander and 11 other officers are killed in a plane crash in central Iran.
- 1997** After a week of torrential rain in southeastern Brazil, at least 67 people are killed and more than 32,000 are left homeless.
- 2000** Former Russian President Boris Yeltsin meets Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the Holy Land.
- 2003** The Tamil Tigers rebel group and the Sri Lankan government hold a round of peace talks, making modest progress toward reconciliation after a 19-year-old civil war, but reaching no significant breakthroughs.
- 2008** Mikhail Saakashvili is elected to a second term as Georgia's president. Thousands of opposition protesters denounce the election as fraudulent.
- 2009** The Indian navy agrees to buy eight reconnaissance and anti-submarine planes from Boeing Co in a \$2.1 billion deal that signals the developing nation's drive to upgrade its military hardware, Boeing announces.
- 2011** Riots over rising food prices and chronic unemployment spiral out from Algeria's capital, with youths torching government buildings and shouting "Bring us Sugar!" — AP

Cambodia ready to chair ASEAN

PHNOM PENH—Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen yesterday said the country will chair ASEAN this year with responsibilities in order to achieve an ASEAN community by 2015.

"We will put all our efforts to chair ASEAN with responsibilities in 2012 in order to push ASEAN towards One Community, One Destiny," Hun Sen said during a visit to Kampong Cham province, 124km east of Phnom Penh.

"As ASEAN chair this year, we will try all our best to act as a fair mediator in all regional and international issues," he added.

The PM said that ASEAN will stick to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of its members.

Cambodia became ASEAN member in 1999 and it firstly chaired ASEAN in 2002.

The PM said that Cambodia's entry into ASEAN has provided huge advantages to Cambodia in terms of social and economic development, security and diplomacy.

EU programme

Meanwhile, the European Union has planned US\$26 million for a new programme to help Cambodian farmers in raising fish and animals, Georges Dehoux, attach of the EU to Cambodia, said on Wednesday.

The 3-year programme will be begun later this year, he said in a seminar, which was attended by Cambodian government officials from the

AIDS deaths down but work remains

PHNOM PENH—Cambodia estimated that about 2,610 people were killed by HIV/AIDS in 2011, a decrease of 11 per cent from 2,943 people a year earlier, Dr Teng Kunthy, secretary general of National Aids Authority (NAA), said yesterday.

He said among the 2,608 deaths last year, 2,484 were over 15 years old and 124 were children, whilst in 2010, among the 2,943 deaths, 2,783 were over 15 years old and 160 were children.

He said last year's new infection rate also declined by 12 per cent to 1,517 people including 191 children from 1,726 people including 256 children in a year earlier.

"We see a good result in our efforts to fight against HIV/AIDS; however, we still not satisfy with it and hope to see further decline in years to come," he said. — XINHUA

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Cambodia has the population of 14.3 million, about 80 per cent of them farmers. Among the farmers, about 90 per cent raises animals and

40 per cent raises fish.

"We hope the new program will increase the productions of fish and animal in Cambodia to meet local and international demands," he said. — XINHUA

S Korea attempts to reopen talks with North

SEOUL — South Korea reached out to North Korea yesterday, nearly three weeks after the death of the North's leader Kim Jong-il, saying it wanted to reopen dialogue.

"We are open to dialogue with North Korea," Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan told a news

briefing in the South Korean capital, Seoul. "The ball is now in North Korea's court."

Since Kim's state funeral last week, the North has returned to using bellicose language against its neighbour, assailing conservative President Lee Myung-bak and his

government for lacking the decency to mourn the death of a compatriot leader.

Lee angered North Korea by cutting off aid when he took office in 2008, and demanding nuclear disarmament and economic reform as conditions for food aid and

political engagement.

The top US diplomat for East Asian affairs, Kurt Campbell, told reporters in Seoul that an essential component of any US-North Korean talks was an improvement of inter-Korean relations.

CONTINUED PAGE 10

Advertisement

INVITATION FOR THE PROVISION OF AB INITIO PILOT TRAINING SERVICES

Vietnam Airlines Corporation is in need of ab initio pilot training for the implementation of the "Ab initio pilot training project for the year 2010 & 2011".

Vietnam Airlines Corporation invites all prospective service providers with relevant competence, experience and qualification to deliver their proposals for the provision of ab initio pilot training services for Vietnam Airlines Corporation.

Service providers with the intention of participating in this provision of ab initio pilot training can have further detailed information at:

Flight Training Centre – Vietnam Airlines Corporation

Address : 117 Hong Ha Street, Ward 2, Tan Binh District, Ho Chi Minh city
Tel : 84 8 38485922
Fax : 84 8 38485830
Email : tienlh@vietnamairlines.com
 c/c: tuyetda@vietnamairlines.com

Service providers are supposed to purchase a complete set of Bidding documents at a non-refundable fee of VND 10,000,000 (Ten million VietNam dong only). Method of payment will be cash or direct deposit to specified account number:

Account name : Flight Training Centre
Account number (VND) : 007.100.1369991
CIF Number : 0102014
SWIFT CODE : BFTV VNVX 007
Bank name : Joint Stock Commercial Bank for Foreign Trade of Vietnam (Vietcombank),
 Hochiminh city branch

Service providers will receive a complete copy of **Request for ab initio pilot training proposal** from Jan 10th 2012 at the above-mentioned address or this copy will be sent to them by E-mail prior to the proposal submission deadline.

The proposal submission deadline is 09 a.m (Hanoi time), Feb 10th 2012.

The proposals of service providers shall be sent to Vietnam Airlines Corporation at the above-mentioned address.

Representative of Vietnam Airlines Corporation

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 WMC

Philippine landslide kills 25, 150 missing

PANTUKAN — At least 25 people were killed in the southern Philippines yesterday when a landslide buried gold prospectors who had refused to leave an area declared too dangerous for habitation.

Up to 150 people were missing after the landslide hit a remote mountain community on Mindanao island that was settled by migrants in search of instant riches despite being declared off-limits last year due to the danger of landslides.

Rescuers using only hand-held tools pulled 25 bodies and 15 injured residents from the rubble after the dawn landslide in Napnapan, near the town of Pantukan, civil defence chief Benito Ramos said.

"A military unit is in the area but they are basically digging with their

hands," he said.

Ramos' agency, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, raised the number of missing to 150 people from an initial estimate of 100, and said the health department was transporting 150 body bags to the site.

The local government meanwhile said the rescue had been halted amid heavy rain from a storm off the coast and fears of more landslides.

Local military official Colonel Lyndon Paniza, who is co-ordinating the rescue from Pantukan, about two hours away via rugged mountain roads, said rescuers fear there could be more fatalities.

"We expect many were killed since the worst-hit was the middle, where there are more than 50

shanties," Paniza said.

The landslide buried an area measuring about 7,500sq.m as people slept, Paniza added.

The provincial government and local mining firms have been asked to bring heavy equipment to the village.

Pantukan and nearby Monkayo, both on the west flank of Mindanao's Pacific Cordilleras mountains, have drawn thousands of gold prospectors for years.

Their largely unregulated activities have made the mountainside unstable and caused a series of deadly accidents, with officials also saying a 2.8-magnitude quake in the area about three hours earlier could have triggered the disaster.

Paniza said another landslide had occurred about

2km away on April 22 last year.

Local officials said that landslide had killed 14 people, while another in 2009 killed 26.

Acting on the advice of national government geologists, local officials ordered the evacuation of all Pantukan gold rush areas last year.

However, they said some people had returned, possibly joined by new migrants drawn by stratospheric gold prices. "It's obvious that the gold attracts them. We cannot guard the mountain 24/7 because we have other responsibilities."

The military is fighting against a decades-long insurgency in the region and officials say rebels extort money from the gold prospectors to finance the rebellion.

Provincial governor Arturo Uy said the local government had forcibly evacuated the residents after last year's landslide. "But the area is remote and the local government has difficulty monitoring the area," he told GMA television.

Miners had been warned of the danger, said environment and natural resources secretary Ramon Paje.

Paje and Ramos also cited the minor quake, with an epicentre about 100km to the northeast, as a possible contributing factor.

Ramos said two military helicopters were airlifting more rescuers to Pantukan from the southern port of Cagayan de Oro, one of two Mindanao cities badly affected by flash floods last month that killed more than 1,200 people. — **AFP**

UK minister visits Myanmar

YANGON — Myanmar President U Thein Sein met with visiting British Foreign Secretary William Hague in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday hours after the latter arrived in the capital earlier on the day, official sources from the new capital said.

Hague touched down in the capital in the morning on a two-day official visit to Myanmar to observe the latest development of the country.

Hague, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, also met with speaker of the parliamentary House of Representatives U Shwe Mann and his Myanmar counterpart U Wunna Maung Lwin in Nay Pyi Taw.

No details about their respective meetings are immediately available.

Hague was to fly to Yangon in the evening and have a formal meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), ethnic minority leaders and other democratic activists in Yangon on the next day, sources with the British Embassy said.

It is the first visit by a British foreign secretary to Myanmar since 1955.

Hague's visit followed the visit of British International Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell in Myanmar in mid-November last year.

According to diplomatic sources, Britain has pledged 185 million pounds (US\$289 million) over three years to fund health and education projects in Myanmar through non-governmental organisations. — **XINHUA**

Jakarta to stop sending domestic helpers overseas

JAKARTA — The Indonesian government plans to stop sending domestic workers abroad from 2017, a minister was quoted as saying yesterday.

"In the (10-year) 2007 roadmap for domestic workers, we hope that the number of Indonesian migrant workers as domestic helpers being sent abroad eventually reaches zero," Manpower Minister Muhaimin Iskandar was quoted by the Jakarta globe as saying.

Nevertheless, the minister admitted that reaching the target would be difficult, with the main constraints including providing enough jobs in Indonesia.

He added that the state had no authority to prevent people from seeking

work abroad.

Muhaimin said the roadmap did foresee the possibility that there would be some people seeking work abroad as domestic helpers after 2017.

Those people, he said, would need to have a clearly defined position and their status would have to be recognised by the recipient country.

"The recipient country would have to recognise them as formal workers with certain rights, such as working hours, the right to holidays and leave as well as to a set salary," he said.

Starting in 2017, he said, anyone going to work abroad as a domestic helper would have to have a clear position waiting for them before moving overseas. — **XINHUA**

Thai troops on standby to deploy in flood-hit south

BANGKOK — Troops across the country will be sent into flood-hit southern provinces if the crisis proves too much for the Fourth Army Region to handle, the *Bangkok Post* reported yesterday.

Army chief Gen Prayuth Chan-ocha said tens of thousands of soldiers from other regions will be sent very soon to assist in flood rescue and relief operations if the

situation worsens.

Thailand is now facing a new round of flash flood, caused by heavy rain, in its lower southern region after the upper part of the country has been recovering from the worst-flood crisis in almost 50 years.

He said the Fourth Army Region, which oversees the South, has set up a flood relief centre and help building makeshift

for evacuees.

"The flood looks scary but the Fourth Army commanders assure us the situation is still under control," *Bangkok Post* quoted the Army Chief as saying.

Gen Prayuth said his prime concern is the persistent rain which would cause mountain runoff, increases the risk of mudslides and slow flood drainage to the sea. — **XINHUA**

S Korea attempts...

FROM PAGE 9

Campbell is making his first visit to Seoul since Kim's death.

South Korea also said yesterday it would set up a fund this year to prepare for eventual reunification with the North.

The unification ministry, which handles cross-border relations, said one of its policy priorities this year was practical preparations for reunification including the fund.

In a policy document it also vowed actively to engage in "reunification di-

plomacy" by garnering international support for Seoul's policies and seeking to share the experiences of Germany.

The ministry gave no details of who would pay into the fund, which has been previously mentioned, or its size. — **REUTERS/AFP**

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AON VIETNAM LIMITED

NOTICE

OFFICE RELOCATION IN HANOI

- Pursuant to the License for Establishment and Operation No. 026/SL-PT-TH-03 issued on 29th March 2009 by Ministry of Finance and the Acceptance Letter No. 17368/BTC-QLBH issued by Ministry of Finance on 21st December 2011 regarding the relocation of Aon Vietnam's office in Hanoi.

- Pursuant to Article 69 in the Law of Insurance Business No. 24/2000/QH10 dated 9 December 2000 regulating insurance business activities, Aon Vietnam Limited is pleased to inform that effective from **5th January 2012**, Aon Vietnam's Hanoi office will be relocated as below:

Old address:	Unit 1403/6/7, 14 th Floor, Vietcombank Tower, 198 Tran Quang Khai Street, Hanoi, Vietnam. Tel: (84.4) 38.260.832 Fax: (84.4) 38.243.983
New address:	Unit 1201, 12 th Floor, Hanoi Central Office Building, 44B Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Hanoi, Vietnam Our telephone, facsimile and email addresses remain unchanged

ANNOUNCEMENT ON BUSINESS SCOPE EXPANSION



- Name of Company:** MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC VIETNAM COMPANY LIMITED
- Address of the head office:** Saigon Trade Center, 37 Ton Duc Thang Street, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City
- Address of the new representative office:** 4 - 6 Floor, Press Club Tower, 59A Ly Thai To Street, Trang Tien Ward, Hoan Kiem District, Ha Noi
- Expanded lines of business:**
 - To implement import right, wholesale distribution right and retail distribution right in respect of the products used in home appliance, industrial automation, information and communication systems, electronic devices, automotive equipment and visual systems with HS Codes in accordance with the Investment Certificate.
 - To provide technical supporting services in respect of the products with Mitsubishi Electric brand and the products imported and distributed by the Enterprise.
 - To provide management consulting services.
 - To provide market research service.

Policy disagreements among European nations on how to manage the dire economic situation are being played out along national lines. These divisions are complicating matters enormously.

Co-operation key to world's economic crisis

George Soros *

NEW YORK — The dire economic situation in which most of the rich world found itself in 2011 was not merely the result of impersonal economic forces, but was largely created by the policies pursued, or not pursued, by world leaders.

Indeed, the remarkable unanimity that prevailed in the first phase of the financial crisis that began in 2008, and which culminated in the US\$1 trillion rescue package put together for the London G-20 meeting in April 2009, dissipated long ago. Now, bureaucratic infighting and misconceptions are rampant.

Worse still, policy disagreements are playing out more or less along national lines. The centre of fiscal conservatism is Germany, while Anglo-Saxon countries are still drawn to John Maynard Keynes.

This division is complicating matters enormously, because close international cooperation is needed to correct the global imbalances that remain at the root of the crisis.

Doubts about sovereign debt in Europe have revolved around the euro to such an extent that

some now question whether the single currency can survive. But the euro was an incomplete currency from the outset.

The Maastricht Treaty established a monetary union without a political union – a common central bank, but no common treasury. Its architects were aware of this deficiency, but other flaws in their design became apparent only after the crash of 2008.

The euro was built on the assumption that markets correct their own excesses, and that imbalances arise only in the public sector. As it happened, some of the largest imbalances that fuelled the current crisis arose in the private sector – and the euro's introduction was indirectly responsible.

In particular, sovereign debt in the eurozone was deemed riskless: banks had only to hold minimal reserves against member countries' bonds, which the European Central Bank accepted on equal terms at its discount window. Member countries could borrow at practically the same interest rate as Germany, and banks were happy to earn a few extra pennies by loading up their balance sheets with the

government debt of the eurozone's weaker economies. For example, European banks hold more than US\$1.3 trillion of Spanish debt, with German and French banks holding more than half of that sum.

Instead of the convergence prescribed by the Maastricht Treaty, the radical narrowing of interest-rate differentials generated divergences in economic performance. Countries like Spain, Greece, and Ireland developed real-estate bubbles, grew faster, and developed trade deficits with the rest of the eurozone, while Germany – weighed down by the costs of reunification – reined in its labor costs, became more competitive and developed a chronic trade surplus.

The convergence of interest rates was broken when a newly elected government in Greece revealed that the deficit incurred by the previous government was much larger than had been reported. European authorities were slow to react, because member countries held radically different views.

Germany, traumatized by runaway inflation in the 1920's, and its dreadful political

consequences, adamantly opposed any bailout. Moreover, it was heading into an election cycle, which increased the rigidity of its position. With German leaders insisting on charging penalty rates for providing assistance, the crisis festered – and the rescue costs continued to grow.

Indeed, as eurozone members' inability to print their own money effectively relegated them to the status of less-developed countries that must borrow in a foreign currency, risk premiums widened accordingly. The authorities, seeing no solution, kicked the can down the road – an approach that usually works, because problems become easier to solve when markets calm down. But, in this case, the crisis kept growing bigger, and the authorities ran out of road when Germany's Constitutional Court ruled out additional guarantees beyond the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) without the consent of the Bundestag.

At the European Union's December 9 summit in Brussels, the eurozone countries agreed to establish a closer fiscal union. But, by the time this decision was

taken, it was no longer sufficient to bring the financial crisis under control.

The measures introduced by the ECB went a long way toward relieving banks' liquidity problems, but nothing was done to reduce the large risk premiums on government bonds. Because the premiums are intimately interconnected with the banks' capital deficiencies, half a solution is not good enough. Unless the sovereign debt of the rest of the eurozone is successively ring-fenced, a Greek default could cause a meltdown of the global financial system.

Even barring such a nightmare scenario in 2012, the summit sowed the seeds of future conflicts – over the emergence of a "two-speed" Europe and the false economic doctrine guiding the eurozone's proposed fiscal pact. That doctrine, by imposing austerity in a period of rising unemployment, threatens to push the eurozone into a vicious deflationary debt spiral from which it will be difficult to escape. — **Project Syndicate**

* George Soros is Chairman of Soros Fund Management and of the Open Society Institute.

Advertisement

INVITATION FOR BIDS

- The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has received a loan, i.e., Loan no. 8026-VN from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development toward the cost of **Transmission & Distribution 2 Project – Additional Financing** and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payments under various contracts for the **500kV SONG MAY SUBSTATION (POWER TRANSFORMER No.2) Sub - Project**.
- The SOUTHERN VIET NAM POWER PROJECT MANAGEMENT BOARD (SPMB), authorized by **National Power Transmission Corporation (NPT)**, now invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders for following goods which are to be carried out for the above mentioned sub-project:

Project / Bid package	Fee for one set of bidding documents	Value of bid security
Package SM-G01: Power Transformers, Shunt Reactors, Materials and Supervision Services (two lots) - Lot 1.1: Supply power transformer, materials and supervision services. - Lot 1.2: Supply shunt reactors, materials and supervision services.	200 USD	Lot 1.1: 70,000 USD Lot 1.2: 40,000 USD
Package SM-G02: Electrical Equipment, Materials and Supervision Services.	200 USD	150,000 USD

- Bidding will be conducted through the international competitive bidding procedures specified in the "World Bank" Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits, May 2004 and is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines.
- Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from SPMB and inspect the bidding documents at the address given below from 08:00 to 11:00 am and 1:30 to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

Southern Vietnam Power Project Management Board (SPMB)
Attn: Mr. Nguyen Tien Hai, Chairman
383 Vo Van Kiet, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Tel. +84-08-22100719 - Fax +84-08-38361096

- Name and address of the Bank are indicated as follows:
Account No. 31010370009091 (USD), Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam, Branch in Ho Chi Minh City.
Account No. 31010000001321 (VND), Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam, Branch in Ho Chi Minh City.
- Bidding documents will be issued at the above address from January 17, 2012. Deadline for submission of bid proposal and bid opening shall be as follows:

Bid Package	Deadline for bid submission	Time for bid opening
Package SM-G01	09:00 March 6, 2012	09:15 March 6, 2012
Package SM-G02	09:00 March 20, 2012	09:15 March 20, 2012

Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the time and place mentioned above.

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR CONSULTING SERVICES FOR TAN VU - LACH HUYEN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

- The Ministry of Transport (MOT) as an official representative of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is planning to develop the Project of Tan Vu - Lach Huyen Highway Construction in Hai Phong (hereinafter referred to the Project). The Directorate for Roads of Vietnam (DRVN) has been assigned by MOT as an Employer of the Project and Project Management Unit No.2 (PMU2) is as an Executing Agency to implement the Project.
- The Identification of the Project: Total length of the Project is 15.629 km of which road length: 10.187 km and bridge length: 5.442 km. The width of road: 29.50m; the width of bridge: 14.50m. The construction location: in Hai An district and Cat Hai district within Haiphong city.
- PMU2 intends to employ a consulting firm for the construction supervision consulting service for the Project. The cost for this service shall be provided by Japanese ODA Loan under STEP condition from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) which is extended to the Project. The employment procedures for this consulting service shall be in accordance with Guidelines for Procurement under Japanese ODA Loans published in March 2009.
- Scope of works of the consulting firm is to provide the consulting services for the fields such as (1) Reviewing the detail design to make acquaintance itself to the Project ; (2) Assistance in the bidding process and contract negotiation; (3) Construction supervision; (4) Environmental and social management / monitoring; (5) Transfer of Technology; (6) Assistance and supervision on construction safety; (7) Coordination with other related works; (8) Preparation of Operation and Maintenance Manual; (9) Defect Liability inspection. The specific requirements for the Project will be stated in Request for EOI.
- Any consulting firm that desires to participate in the Project for this service can obtain further detail information and get Request for Express of Interest starting from **8:00 AM January 4th 2012** at Project Implementation Division No. 5 (PID5) PMU2 as the following address.

Project Management Unit No.2 (PMU2)
No.18 Pham Hung Road, Mai Dich Ward, Cau Giay District, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Telephone: +84-4-37680063(61); Facsimile: +84-4-37680073/37681975
Or contact with Ms. Ngoc 090.320.3963

- Expression of Interest Dossier submitted by consulting firms should include (1) Letter of Express of Interest; (2) Qualification Profile of the Firm(s) which shall be prepared in accordance with Instructions to the Consultant in the Request for EOI and submitted at above address not later than **9:00 AM on January 30th 2012**.
- Late EOI shall be rejected.

Bangladesh's farmers count on climate-proof crops

Naimul Haq

DHAKA — With floods, droughts and other calamities battering deltaic Bangladesh regularly, farmers need little prompting in switching to climate-resistant varieties of rice, wheat, pulses and other staples.

The crop diversification, actively supported by the government's research institutions, is already benefiting the 145 million people of this densely populated, predominantly agricultural South Asian country.

Mosammet Sabera Begum, 38, a farmer in Purbadebu village, Rangpur district, about 370km from the capital, earned Bangladeshi taka 14,000 (US\$177) last summer selling paddy cultivated on two acres of land leased from a local landlord.

"I'd planted 'paikam' (an early maturing rice breed) which is ready for harvest about 30 days earlier than traditional varieties that take 150 days. It is superior in quality, has higher yield and fetches better price," said Sabera, mother of two teenage girls.

The rice variety that Sabera resorted to, developed last year by the Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), withstands floods, drought and pest attacks and gives 4.5 - 5.5 tonnes per hectare compared to regular varieties which yield a maximum of three tonnes per hectare.

"The 'BINA Dhan-7' variety holds extra benefit for farmers. It can be sown during the monsoon (lean season beginning September) or while regular varieties are still maturing in the fields. So, in a sense, it is an additional crop harvested in shorter duration," said Abdus Salam, head of research at BINA.

"BINA Dhan-7 has good economic, social and ecological acceptance. The biggest advantage of this variety is that it takes a shorter time to grow even during extreme drought conditions."

In fact, BINA Dhan-7 combats seasonal food shortages by creating job opportunities for farm labourers who would wait for, on average, two extra months before the regular variety of rice would ripen.

Far in the southwest, 43-year-old Nargis Ara Begum dries harvested paddy in an open courtyard that she and her hus-

band, Mukul Miah, had cultivated on highly saline soil.

"We never expected to get such a good harvest in salty soil," said Nargis who owns the small granary next to her home in the Chaukani village of Satkhira district, located some 320km southwest of Dhaka.

Nargis and her husband had cultivated a rice variety developed by the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) named, 'BRRI-47', which survives highly saline and water-logged conditions.

Farmers who had given up hope of growing crops in salty soil are keen to follow Nargis's example and ready to invest in the new rice variety.

Not very far from Koyra lives Asma Begum, 32, a woman farmer in the Boro Nawabpur village of coastal Bagerhat district, who borrowed 914 dollars from a local non-government organisation to cultivate rice in saline soil, is confident of recovering her investment.

"I trained at the agriculture extension department learning to handle saplings. I heard that farmers in other districts successfully raised BRRI-47 and earned good profits," said Asma, who now trains other local farmers, mostly women, to cultivate BRRI-47 rice.

Last summer, in Raghunathpur village in the Birampur sub-district of north-western Dinajpur district, Raxmi Mayaboti, 39, and her husband, Kailash Sarker, cultivated a new variety of wheat on three acres of land in the arid Barind Tract - a desertified region spread over 8,000sq km.

The environment here is dry and hot during summer and growing crops in such conditions is considered impossible, except for 'BARI Gom 25' a new variety of wheat developed by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC).

"We had no problem raising wheat on the dry soil," said Mayaboti. "Unlike traditional varieties of wheat, BARI Gom-25 requires water only in the initial stages and once the plants mature there is no need for further irrigation and nurturing."

Other climate-proof varieties of crops developed in Bangladesh and available in the market include tomatoes, sweet potatoes, onion, pulses, mustard oil and sugarcane. — IPS



Salesmen work at the poultry pavilion at Rungis international food market, near Paris. Under President Sarkozy's newly unveiled plan to raise sales tax, domestic consumers in France will have to pay higher prices for everything from food to household goods. — AFP/VNA Photo

'Social VAT' may harm Sarkozy

Catherine Bremer

PARIS — French President Nicolas Sarkozy is taking a dangerous gamble months from a presidential election with his plan to raise sales taxes to ease the burden of social welfare contributions on companies struggling to emerge from economic crisis.

The centre-right leader is trumpeting "Social VAT" as a way of bolstering competitiveness and propping up the flagging economy, but he risks a backlash from voters who would face higher prices for everything from household goods to handbags.

The move, announced on Tuesday in only sketchy detail, is the latest effort by Sarkozy to show that he is the man to pull the country out of what he is calling a "planetary" crisis, as he tries to catch up with Socialist rival Francois Hollande in opinion polls for the April election.

Yet many analysts see the plan backfiring — if already disgruntled voters shun it — or fizzling out, if it is opposed by trade unions in meetings with the government this month.

"It would be a first in history if the public supports a tax rise," said political analyst Stephane Rozes. "Sarkozy is going to be penalised by the fact that the public views his economic and social policies to date as unfair, so even if this measure is wise economically it will be perceived negatively."

The plan marks a new focus by Sarkozy on growth and employment after his budget-cutting efforts last year failed to assuage rating agencies' doubts about France's AAA credit rating.

After making a public relations turnaround in December and saying that losing the triple-A badge would not be a disaster, Sarkozy is now vowing to seek a deal with unions at January 18 talks to safeguard jobs by making labour laws more flexible.

His plan to ease companies' welfare payments, and balance that with a rise in the 19.6 per cent value-added tax rate, would be discussed at the same time and painted as a way of helping French companies compete with peers in emerging markets.

By shifting the tax burden onto domestic consumption, Sarkozy aims to boost the competitiveness of French exports, which are exempt, emulating a 2007 VAT rise by Germany which was credited with strengthening its recovery.

The risk is that, unlike a German economy geared to export production, France has relied on domestic consumption to power growth in recent years.

"It's a crazy idea and it could be buried a month from now if the unions block it," said analyst Philippe Moreau Defarges at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI).

"You can't raise prices when people are already suffering. You wonder if the conservatives feel they've already lost the election and so they are ready to risk everything."

Union leaders, who will hold initial talks with the government today, slammed the proposal, and said it was unrealistic to think it could reduce the competitive edge of companies in emerging nations like China.

"This is the biggest rip-

off of the New Year," thundered Bernard Thibault, head of the CGT union, on France 2TV.

Calculated risk?

Sarkozy is not expected to announce until late-February that he will run for a second term in the two-round election on April 22 and May 6, but unofficial campaigning is already under way.

Recent polls predict Sarkozy and Hollande knocking out far-right leader Marine Le Pen in the first round, after which Hollande could win the runoff by as many as 10 percentage points.

Resolving the euro zone's debt crisis and bucking up the economy have become the twin top issues for the 2012 election. France risks losing its AAA in a matter of days, jobless claims are at a 12-year high, growth is sluggish and the trade deficit is at a record level above US\$70 billion euros.

Sarkozy focused his New Year TV address on the economy, and flagged the idea of a rise in value-added tax to fund welfare and lessen the edge of foreign companies over French ones.

"He's obviously taking a risk but it's a calculated one because there is an awareness among voters that something needs to be done," said Thomas Klau, head of the Paris office of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"Any tax rise involves a degree of political risk but these are not ordinary times and textbook considerations that govern re-election campaigns do not necessarily apply."

VAT is the top source of revenue for the French government, set to reap 273 billion euros this year after the

lower VAT rate on essential goods and labour-intensive services was lifted on January 1 to 7 per cent from 5.5 per cent.

A 1 per cent rise in the broader VAT rate could garner some 7 billion euros in extra revenue for the state, although much of that could be offset by the planned lower labour charges.

Finance Minister Francois Baroin said legislation to lower labour charges would be presented to parliament in February and Budget Minister Valerie Pécresse said VAT would play a part.

"We know that our labour charges are too high," Pécresse told Canal+TV. "The president wants us to change the way we finance welfare before the election."

French companies lag behind their peers in Germany due in part to the fact that they pay 50 euros in charges for every 100 euros they pay in wages, compared to 39 euros in Germany.

The "Social VAT" idea has been backed in the past by politicians on the left and the right, but it proved toxic for the ruling UMP party in 2007 when then finance minister Jean-Louis Borloo pushed the idea during legislative elections and was blamed for losing the party dozens of seats.

Hollande seized on the issue on Tuesday evening, saying people could not be hit with higher VAT given existing gloom.

On Wednesday, centrist presidential hopeful Francois Bayrou called it a "dangerous idea" and said France would not accept "lowering the purchasing power of workers and pensioners." — REUTERS

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Việt Nam News

BUSINESS

Friday January 6, 2012

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PM gives nod to import, export strategy

HÀ NỘI — The nation's new import and export strategy has been approved to triple total export turnover in 2020.

Under the strategy for 2012-20 and its vision to 2030, it sets out specific targets to reach an average export growth rate of between 11-12 per cent a year between 2012-20.

The strategy aims for an average annual export growth rate of 12 per cent between 2011-15, 11 per cent for 2016-20 and 10 per cent for 2021-30. The growth rate of imports was expected to be lower than the export growth rate.

It also aims to gradually minimise the trade deficit to below 10 per cent of export turnover in 2015 and to balance trade by 2020.

It has targeted four export groups: energy, minerals, agro forestry products and processed industry items. Exports will be developed in a sustainable and reasonable manner while focusing on high added-value exports.

For imports, the strategy is to actively adjust the growth rate of

imports and develop the production of fuel and raw materials for export sectors so as to meet domestic demand and develop support industries as well as strictly controlling the importation of goods, thus helping to minimise the trade deficit for the long term.

The strategy is also aimed at meeting a need to import machines and high-tech equipment for local production in order to save energy and raw materials.

In addition, Việt Nam needs to expand its export markets, especially to countries which have signed Free Trade Agreements with Việt Nam (trade bloc member countries sign a free trade agreement which eliminates tariffs, import quotas and preferences on most (if not all) goods and services traded between them).

The strategy, which came into effect under Decision No 2471/QĐ-TTg targets by 2020 to have 46 per cent of exports going to the Asian market, 20 per cent to Europe, 25 to America, 4 to Oceania and 5 to Africa. — VNS



Engines are manufactured by workers at the Southern Agricultural Machinery Co. Processed industrial items are among four targeted export groups under the nation's new import and export strategy to 2020. — VNA/VNS Photo Văn Khánh

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IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, is the largest global development institution focused exclusively on the private sector. We help developing countries achieve sustainable growth by financing investment, providing advisory services to businesses and governments, and mobilizing capital in the international financial markets. In fiscal 2011, amid economic uncertainty across the globe, we helped our clients create jobs, strengthen environmental performance, and contribute to their local communities all while driving our investments to an all-time high of nearly \$19 billion. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

IFC Vietnam is now looking for a **Program Assistant** to assist in the in-country activities of the IFC. The Program Assistant is also assigned responsibility for some aspects of the unit's administrative functions, to include translating/drafting a variety of standard documents, applying effective proofreading and grammar skills in English.

Scope of the Job:

The Program Assistant positions are held by experienced staff whose acquired knowledge and skills enable them to independently undertake diverse and complex work assignments (e.g., database management, knowledge management, task management, major event/course planning, etc.). With only routine supervision, the Program Assistant works closely with other staff within the unit to make a significant contribution to the overall achievement of the unit's work program. Work requires extensive coordination with colleagues in other offices and frequent liaison with team members, regardless of location, and external counterparts.

Selection Criteria:

- The ideal candidate will have a Bachelor degree with at least 5 years work experience in relevant position such as secretary, administration assistance in multi-national or international organization.
- Good knowledge of and demonstrated experience in specialized administrative/operational support functions (e.g., task management, database management, knowledge management, major event/course planning, etc.) and ability to apply relevant procedures, processes and systems.
- Analytical ability, practical problem-solving skills and resourcefulness in performing varied tasks in the area(s) of functional specialty.
- Demonstrated skills in retrieving, gathering and obtaining information from various sources (Internet, etc.) and pulling them together in a usable format.
- Sound organizational skills and ability to prioritize and deliver assignments in a timely manner often under severe time pressures.
- Results-oriented team player; demonstrated initiative, reliability and resourcefulness in developing practical approaches that improve office support work and effectiveness of unit/team.
- Strong interpersonal skills in order to deal tactfully and effectively with internal/external contacts at all levels; and commitment to work in a team-oriented, multi-cultural environment.
- Thorough knowledge and use of all relevant computer software, including advanced functions of Bank standard computer applications, e-mail usage, presentation materials preparation, etc.
- Strong English language skills (verbal and written), including ability to draft a variety of correspondence and edit materials using proper grammar, punctuation and style.
- Highly motivated, dedicated, reliable, and flexible, in order to achieve planned results.
- Willingness to take up additional ad-hoc responsibilities other than duties directly related to this position whenever needed.

The position is for an initial period of up to two years with local package compensation, and is based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Interested candidate please review the complete job description and apply on-line at <http://www.ifc.org/careers> and choose vacancy number 112626. Please note that you need to register before submitting your application. The closing date is 11th January 2012. Only applicants selected for interview will be contacted.



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BRIEFS

Gas prices rise twice in one month

HÀ NỘI — The domestic gas retail price increased by VND8,000 (US\$0.38) per 12kg canister yesterday, hitting VND383,000 (\$18.20).

Lê Phúc Đại, general director of the Vinagas Đại Việt Energy JSC, attributed the rise to the increase in the fuel import tax rate from 2-5 per cent earlier this month.

The increase in the retail price was the second in five days after it rose by VND24,000 (\$1.14) per 12kg canister on January 1.

City leads country in industrial production

HCM CITY — HCM City held its leading position in industrial development last year in both production size and development level, the municipal Department of Industry and Trade director Nguyễn Văn Lai said.

The city's production value last year reached VND740 trillion (US\$32.5 billion), contributing to 42 per cent of the south's main industrial zone production value and 27.4 per cent of the country's industrial production value.

This year, the city has set an industrial production value target of VND881 trillion (\$42 billion), equivalent to a 19.2 per cent year-on-year increase.

30,000 tonnes of sugar to be exported

HÀ NỘI — The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on Wednesday asked the Ministry of Industry and Trade to allow domestic enterprises to export 30,000 tonnes of sugar.

The move was made after the Việt Nam Sugar Association reported a high sugar output of 1.4 million tonnes in the 2011-12 crop and low sugar consumption demands in the domestic market.

Baskin-Robbins ice cream launched

HCM CITY — The world largest ice cream chain, US-based Baskin-Robbins, will launch three shops in the city today.

The shops will be managed by Blue Star Food Corporation under a franchised agreement between the two sides.

Blue Star Food Corporation general director Nguyễn Thành Nam said the corporation planned to increase the number of shops to 50 in the next five years. — VNS

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Hà Nội expands price stabilisation

HÀ NỘI — The capital city would expand its price stabilisation programme to limit the impact of price increase on the people's living standards, Hà Nội Industry and Trade Department deputy director Nguyễn Văn Đồng said.

Hà Nội would increase the number of fixed and mobile outlets of goods at stabilised prices, especially in suburban areas and industrial zones, and continue bringing rice, meat and eggs to schools and kindergartens.

The department would open nine mobile markets to sell goods in nine districts in the city for farmers.

Relevant offices would closely follow the supply and demand of goods and services in Hà Nội, Đồng said. The offices would also promote a "market watch", to prevent trade fraud and smuggling, and penalise violations, he said.

Additionally, enterprises that get zero-interest loans under the price stabilisation programme must store goods and expand the distribution system for goods at stabilised prices to avoid escalation,



A consumer buys goods at Hóm Market in Hà Nội. The city will expand its price stabilisation programme this year. — VNS Photo Trương Vĩ

he said.

Đồng said that to meet increasing demand on consumption goods for Tết, large companies such as Hapro, Fivimart and BigC, had begun stocking up three months ago.

Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Hồ Thị

Kim Thoa said that Hà Nội should attract more production enterprises into the stabilisation programme to create a stable supply.

Last year, a number of enterprises based in Hà Nội that were not eligible to get loans from the pro-

gramme still kept products at stabilised prices to reduce difficulty for consumers.

In 2011, Hà Nội spent VND560 billion (US\$26.8 million) in total from its budget for the programme. The city last year opened 665 outlets selling price

stabilised goods, double the number in 2010. The programme also organised six outlets selling price stabilised goods in industrial zones and provided price-stabilised food to canteens at schools and companies with low-income workers. — VNS

Ministry calls for control on property capital flow

HCM CITY — The Construction Ministry has proposed to the Prime Minister that measures must be taken to control capital flows into the property market to prevent speculation.

Deputy Minister of Construction, Nguyễn Trần Nam, said implementation should be cautious to avoid causing a stagnant market.

"It is necessary to stabilise the market so as to avoid high inflation and an economic bubble," he said.

The ministry said the Government should continue to reduce the number of loans to urban areas, high-rise apartment building projects and office condominiums for lease, as well as loans for site-clearance compensation.

It should increase the proportion of loans for new factory infrastructure to serve businesses as well as loans for residential housing. Loans for completed or nearly completed projects should also be given to increase liquidity for products.

Nam said the Construction Ministry and the State Bank of Việt Nam were considering excluding the real estate sector from the non-productive sector, which is burdened with credit rules.

"It is necessary to stabilise the market so as to avoid high inflation and an economic bubble."

DEPUTY MINISTER OF CONSTRUCTION
NGUYỄN TRẦN NAM

If credit policies became more flexible and interest rates more stable, and more cash flow was put into the market with high liquidity, buyers would be more trusting, and the property market would recover more quickly, he added.

The country's socio-economic development would develop strongly if the property market is strong.

In Việt Nam, property demand is high, with real estate loans now accounting for a small percentage of the total outstanding loans of banks.

Commercial housing transactions are currently quiet, but he considers that to be temporary.

A risk of a bubble and collapse is very low, according to Nam.

However, he said credit organisations could face risks if they continued to sponsor infeasible projects and

luxury buildings that have low liquidity.

He also gave a warning against the credit organisations that issue corporate bonds but in reality offer property loans.

When the market is frozen for a long time, businesses cannot sell their products, and the risk of losing money is high. This practice has also led to instability in the financial system and the economy.

He also said the collapse of "black credit" in recent months should also serve as a warning to banks.

After some commercial banks stopped giving property loans, individuals and companies began to illegally offer credit at very high interest rates for those in need of money.

But many people, including real estate investors, fell into major debt and bankruptcy. — VNS

City to promote Vietnamese goods

HCM CITY — The city will continue its campaign to promote consumption of Vietnamese goods this year, according to Dương Quan Hà, chairman of the HCM City Fatherland Front.

He said that public agencies, enterprises and local residents had strongly supported the campaign.

Speaking at a meeting in HCM City yesterday to review the "Vietnamese People use Vietnamese Products" campaign, he said that many local companies considered it a good opportunity to capture a bigger market share of the home market and improve their brand's reputation here and abroad.

As a result of the campaign, consumers have come to trust the products and service quality of local goods. The consumption ratio of domestic goods has been increasing in both traditional markets and supermarkets.

Bùi Hạnh Thu, deputy general director of Sài Gòn Co.op, said local goods now accounted for 90 per cent of the total stock at her chain compared to 40-45 per cent in 1996, when Co.opMart first opened.

More and more goods produced by local companies sat-

isfy consumer demand both in quality and price, she said.

Sài Gòn Co.op this year plans to widen its distribution system by opening nine to 10 new Co.opMart supermarkets and 15 Co.opFood shops to distribute Vietnamese goods to all of the country's regions.

Trịnh Chí Cường, general director of Đại Đồng Tiến Corporation, said his company would build new factory equipped with modern technology to improve product quality.

In addition, Cường said the company would focus more on expanding its distribution systems both in modern and traditional distribution channels.

The company also plans to penetrate other neighbouring countries as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

But attendees at the meeting cautioned that smuggled and poor quality goods as well as fakes were still available in markets, especially in rural areas, causing difficulties for local producers.

They said that authorised agencies should strengthen inspection of markets and strictly punish violators to protect the local producers' legitimate interests. — VNS

The Net Delusion

The Dark Side of Internet Freedom



by Evgeny Morozov
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432 pages

Recommendation

Social studies scholar Evgeny Morozov may occasionally be cranky and stylistically conflicted, but his original arguments provide refreshing insights. He debunks nearly religious beliefs about the intrinsically positive power of the Internet and total information access. Morozov demonstrates how propagating this optimistic view of the web drowns out more subtle positions and keeps governmental and societal attention focused on less meaningful activities. *getAbstract* recommends this worthy polemic to those engaged in cyberculture, those trying to decipher cultural change, and those dedicated to understanding and promoting freer societies.

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Vinatex goes public for cash

HÀ NỘI — The Việt Nam National Textile and Garment Group (Vinatex) would equitise its remaining affiliates and holding group this year in a bid to raise capital, expand scale and sharpen its competitive edge in the global market, said the group's deputy director general, Lê Tiến Trường.

The group reported its business performance at an online press conference in HCM City, Hà Nội and Đà Nẵng yesterday.

"Vinatex charter capital is around VNĐ3.4 trillion (US\$162 million) while its export turnover is 14 times higher, so privatisation plays a significant role in the group's development strategy this year," he said.

It should be easier to privatise the remaining affiliates because most of them are small firms, but it is not going to be easy to complete the entire equitisation of the group this year, but we will strive to realise the target, Trường said.

Another key point in the group's development plans is to improve the market forecasting that helped them achieve good business results last year, despite the global economic crisis.

Vinatex is looking to boost exports to new markets including Russia and Canada, while exploiting free trade agree-



Workers make clothes for export at Đà Nẵng Textile Manufacturing Export Import Co, a subsidiary of Việt Nam National Textile and Garment Group (Vinatex). This year, Vinatex will equitise its remaining affiliates. — VNA/VNS Photo Viết Ý

ments with China, South Korea and Japan.

This was vital, given the economic woes in the world's largest economies including the EU, the US and Japan, which are some of Việt Nam's major clothing importers, Trường said.

The group also plans to withdraw all capital from non-core businesses to focus on the textile and garment sector alone this year.

Its total capital in non-core fields was only VNĐ170 billion, much lower than other groups, according to Trường.

The group will also expand distribution in the local market by adding 14 Vinatex-Mart outlets to the existing 61.

In addition, the group will bolster training and invest in advanced equipment and technologies.

Vinatex earned \$2.4 billion

from exports in 2011, up 26 per cent against the previous year. Its pre-tax profit reached VNĐ1.34 trillion (\$64 million), a success in the current economic climate.

This year, the group expects 14 per cent growth in export value against last year.

Vinatex exports account for about 17 per cent of the country's textile and apparel industry. — VNS

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TENDER INVITATION NOTICE

VietinBank is preparing to announce an international bid for "Procurement and Implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software at VietinBank" within the project Procurement and Implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System at Vietinbank.

VietinBank would like to invite both domestic and international bidders who are eligible and qualified to submit their bid, as follows:

- A complete set of Bidding documents may be purchased by interested bidders at the Financial Accounting Management Department, Floor 6, Room 605 - VietinBank Head Office - 108 Tran Hung Dao - Hoan Kiem - Ha Noi, from 8 a.m, January 16th, 2012, to 9 a.m., February 20th, 2012 (during office hours). The price for each bidding document is USD 1,000 (one thousand dollars) or VND 20,000,000.00 (Twenty million Vietnamese dong). Upon purchasing bidding documents, Bidders' representatives are required to have reference letters and personal ID or passport.

- Bidding documents must be submitted to Administration Department (room 404 - 406) - VietinBank Head Office 108 Tran Hung Dao - Hoan Kiem - Ha Noi. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security Declaration, as prescribed in the bidding documents. Bidders' representatives are required to bring reference letters and personal ID or passport when submitting bid and attending bid opening.

- Bids must be delivered on or before 9 a.m, February 20th, 2012. Bids will be publicly opened at 9.15 a.m., February 20th, 2012 at VietinBank Head Office - 108 Tran Hung Dao - Hoan Kiem - Ha Noi with the presence of the bidders' representatives who submit the bid.

- If interested eligible bidders need further information from VietinBank, please contact:

Mr. Le Duy Hai Director of Corporate Banking Department 108 Tran Hung Dao, Hoan Kiem, Ha Noi.

Tel: 84.4.39425756, Fax: 84.4.39421168

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Recovery a long-term prospect

HÀ NỘI — Shares on the nation's stock exchanges continued declining yesterday even as markets throughout the Asian region were more mixed over renewed concerns about the European debt crisis, fanned by news that eurozone banks had deposited a record of US\$591 billion with the European Central Bank.

"Signs of a rally are no stronger, and the current expectation is just a technical correction," said analysts for BIDV Securities Co. "The current status of the market is only suitable for long-term buys."

With more optimistic

prospects for the economy, supporting information might appear as soon as the second quarter, said FPT Securities Co analysts. "Instead of short-term targets with high risk, investors should turn to medium- and long-term prospects which promise lower risk" they said.

On the HCM City Stock Exchange yesterday, the VN-Index shed 2.3 per cent to close at just 340.94 points, setting a new three-month low. Losers overwhelmed gainers by 149-60. The value of trades reached only VNĐ304.4 billion (US\$14.5 million), while market vol-

ume dropped 18.9 per cent to 20.6 million shares.

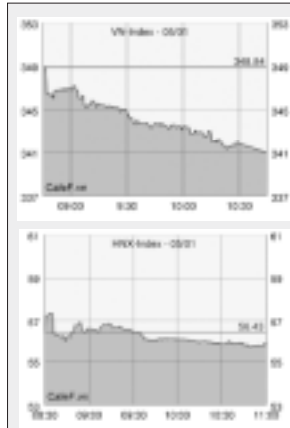
Blue chips tumbled, with none of the 10 leading shares by capitalisation posting gains. Shares of real estate developer Vincom (VIC) hit their floor price of VNĐ94,500 (\$4.50) per share. Sacombank (STB), closing down by 1.2 per cent, was again the most-active share, with 1.8 million traded.

On the Hà Nội Stock Exchange, the HNX-Index retreated by another 1 per cent, concluding the day at 55.89 points. Nearly 86 per cent of all listed codes tumbled,

even as the value of trades rose by 12.3 per cent over the previous session to VNĐ181.6 billion (\$8.6 million). Volume reached 20.4 million shares.

VNDirect Securities Co (VND) was the most-active share nationwide, with more than 1.9 million exchanged, but it bottomed out to just VNĐ6,400 per share.

In HCM City, foreign investors returned to being net sellers by a margin of VNĐ8 billion (\$380,950), but they were net buyers for the 16th consecutive session in Hà Nội by a margin of VNĐ22 billion (\$1 million). — VNS



World stock markets

Thursday, January 5

INDICES	CLOSE	CHG%
Bangkok SET	1,036.80	+0.06
HK Hang Seng	18,813.41	+0.46
Jakarta JSE	3,906.26	-0.03
Kuala Lumpur KLC	1,514.43	+0.68
Manila PSE Composite	4,518.91	+0.59
Mumbai Sensex	15,857.10	-0.16
Seoul Kospi	1,863.74	-0.13
Shanghai SCI	2,148.45	-0.97
S'pore STI	2,713.02	+0.07
Sydney SP/ASX	4,142.70	-1.08
Taipei WPI	7,130.86	+0.68
Tokyo Nikkei 225	8,488.71	-0.83

CONTINUED PAGE 18

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Stock market slump has knock on effect

HÀ NỘI — Việt Nam's stock market slumped by more than 7 per cent during December, which resulted in a decline of the net asset value (NAV) of local funds listed outside Việt Nam with an average loss of 5.13 per cent, according to the Việt Nam Fund Rating Report in December.

The report, introduced for the first time by Woori CBV Securities Corporation in November last year, is a monthly evaluation of the performances of investment funds with Vietnamese holdings currently listed on in-

ternational exchanges.

The report found fund ratings in December were essentially unchanged compared to the previous month, with more than 80 per cent of rated funds continuing to be ranked below average with negative final scores.

Among the 11 rated funds, the JF Việt Nam Opportunities Fund, managed by JP Morgan Asset Management with assets under management of US\$117.2 million, received the highest rating of five stars for

the second time. Its NAV suffered a moderate loss of 4.48 per cent.

At the other end of the spectrum, the FTSE Việt Nam Index Fund, with assets valued at about \$222 million, received one star for the second month in a row for its performance. Its NAV also saw the biggest loss of 10.92 per cent.

In theory, during time of recession, balanced and conservative strategy tends to outperform the aggressive, but for the last month of 2011, balanced

funds lost an average of 6.57 per cent while aggressive funds' losses were just 4.38 per cent, the report states.

"However, the performance of each fund in a single month does not guarantee a better rating for that month. With our revised methodology, funds are assessed for longer term performance, along with other related factors focusing on risk and efficiency, rather than just the NAV figure," the report said.



Consulate General of the United States of America
Ho Chi Minh City

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Consulate General of the United States of America in Ho Chi Minh City is seeking an individual for employment in Vietnam for a full-time position (40 hours per week) in its office of Assistant Regional Security Officer-Investigator (ARSO-I). Actual filling of this position is contingent upon the availability of funds.

NOTE: All applicants who are not family members of U.S. government agencies or offices under/not under Chief of Mission's authority must have required work and residency permits to be eligible for consideration.

CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATOR, FSN-10; FP-5
Announcement Number: HCMALL 12/02A

This announcement is for a full performance level. The position is also advertised at a trainee level. Please see the ANNOUNCEMENT NUMBER HCMALL 12/02B for reference.

BASIC FUNCTION OF THE POSITION

Incumbent of this position will be responsible for conducting investigations of passport fraud, visa fraud, alien smuggling, human trafficking, fugitive returns and other criminal actions that impact the national security of the United States for entire mission Vietnam to include Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The incumbent will report directly to the ARSO-I, and will also be responsible for supervising other Locally Engaged Staff (LES) when they are involved in supporting Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) criminal investigations.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

All applicants are instructed to address each selection criterion detailed below with specific and comprehensive information supporting each item:

- University degree in one of the following fields: Law, Security, International Relations, Economics, Politics, Language, Journalism, Accounting, Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics or other related fields is required.
- Must have at least five years of progressively responsible experience in the fraud prevention, criminal or civil investigations, prosecution fields or consular work.
- Must have 1) working knowledge of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act and current Immigration law, visa issuance process and the fraud trends associated with the visa process for both Non-Immigrant and Immigrant visas; 2) thorough knowledge of 9 FAM pertaining to US visa qualification and adjudication procedures; Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Instructions and Procedures related to the Overseas Criminal Investigations program; 3) understanding of the U.S. federal prosecution procedures, rules of evidence, and U.S. Code as related to the offenses of visa fraud offenses, passport fraud, human smuggling and trafficking; 4) deep understanding of general Vietnamese criminal police procedures and the local law enforcement community as well as understanding of local government structures, practices and regulations including Vietnamese civil and criminal laws and criminal prosecutorial procedures and norms within the judicial system; 5) thorough knowledge of local cultural and business practices; 6) good working knowledge of documentary sources of information and familiarity with pertinent local laws such as invasion of privacy, marriage, divorce, etc. as well as criminal activities and modus operandi of criminal organizations in Vietnam.
- Must have abilities to 1) maintain extensive contacts with senior and working-level officials of local law enforcement and other government agencies; 2) exercise initiative and resourcefulness in obtaining information and criminal evidence for use in a court of law and draft concise, structured reports that isolate key points of complex investigations; 3) assimilate Department of State manuals and procedures, and implement guidance accordingly; 4) receive verbal instructions and implement concept-to-goal without significant supervision and articulately brief results of investigations to the ARSO-I, Regional Security Officer, or senior elements within the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security; 5) work as a critical and independent thinker and as a team toward a common goal; 6) Must have a valid motorbike and car(B1) driving licence
- Must demonstrate proficiency in word processing, spreadsheets, databases and other computer application (i.e. Microsoft Office, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) (this will be tested).
- Level 4 (Fluent) Speaking/Reading/Writing English is required (this will be tested). Level 4 (Fluent) Speaking/Reading/Writing Vietnamese is required.

Additional information about this position including the selection process and selection criteria is available at the Internet address: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/jobs.html>

You may download the application form from the website or paper copies are available from the Security Post at the U.S. Consulate General, 4 Le Duan Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, between the hours of 8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

Submit Applications to the Management Office, U.S. Consulate General, 7A Mac Dinh Chi Street, Ho Chi Minh City. All applications must be put in sealed envelopes and addressed to the Management Officer to receive consideration. Please write clearly on your envelope the position for which you are applying. Only short-listed applicants will be contacted for interviews.

CLOSING DATE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION: FEBRUARY 03, 2012
(All applications must be received by the closing date to receive consideration)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



Consulate General of the United States of America
Ho Chi Minh City

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QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

All applicants are instructed to address each selection criterion detailed below with specific and comprehensive information supporting each item:

- University degree in one of the following fields: Law, Security, International Relations, Economics, Politics, Language, Journalism, Accounting, Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics or other related fields is required.
- Must have at least four years of progressively responsible experience in the fraud prevention, criminal or civil investigations, prosecution fields or consular work.
- Must have 1) understanding of general Vietnamese criminal police procedures and the local law enforcement community as well as understanding of local government structures, practices and regulations; 2) thorough knowledge of local cultural and business practices; 3) good knowledge of documentary sources of information and familiarity with pertinent local laws such as invasion of privacy, marriage, divorce, etc. in Vietnam.
- Must have abilities to 1) maintain extensive contacts with senior and working-level officials of local law enforcement and other government agencies; 2) exercise initiative and resourcefulness in obtaining information and criminal evidence for use in a court of law and draft concise, structured reports that isolate key points of complex investigations; 3) assimilate Department of State manuals and procedures, and implement guidance accordingly; 4) receive verbal instructions and implement concept-to-goal without significant supervision and articulately brief results of investigations to the ARSO-I, Regional Security Officer, or senior elements within the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security; 5) work as a critical and independent thinker and as a team toward a common goal; 6) Must have a valid motorbike driving licence.
- Must demonstrate proficiency in word processing, spreadsheets, databases and other computer application (i.e. Microsoft Office, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) (this will be tested).
- Level 4 (Fluent) Speaking/Reading/Writing English is required (this will be tested). Level 4 (Fluent) Speaking/Reading/Writing Vietnamese is required.

Additional information about this position including the selection process and selection criteria is available at the Internet address: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/jobs.html>

You may download the application form from the website or paper copies are available from the Security Post at the U.S. Consulate General, 4 Le Duan Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, between the hours of 8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

Submit Applications to the Management Office, U.S. Consulate General, 7A Mac Dinh Chi Street, Ho Chi Minh City. All applications must be put in sealed envelopes and addressed to the Management Officer to receive consideration. Please write clearly on your envelope the position for which you are applying. Only short-listed applicants will be contacted for interviews.

CLOSING DATE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION: FEBRUARY 03, 2012
(All applications must be received by the closing date to receive consideration)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Shares, euro dip; French bonds eyed

TOKYO — Asian shares and the euro eased yesterday as concerns about the ability of eurozone countries to refinance their huge public debt dampened investors' appetite for risk ahead of a French bond auction later in the day.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.2 per cent, off its highest in nearly a month, touched on Wednesday, dragged lower by Australian shares. Firm banks boosted China shares and supported Hong Kong stocks.

Japan's Nikkei slipped from Wednesday's three-week high to trade down 0.8 per cent.

European markets will likely rise, with financial spreadbetters expecting London's FTSE to start up as much as 0.2 per cent and Frankfurt's DAX and Paris' CAC-40 to open around 0.1 per cent higher.

The euro eased 0.2 per

cent to around US\$1.2920 yesterday, nearing a 2011 low of around \$1.2856 hit on December 29. A break below that would take it back to levels not seen since September 2010. The euro stayed below 100 yen, not far above 98.71 yen hit on Monday, its lowest since late 2000.

"Eurozone debt worries persist and the euro is basically on a declining trend, while undergoing short-term swings depending on the degree of risks," said Tomoko Fujii, FX strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch in Tokyo.

France plans to raise up to 8 billion euros in long-term debt yesterday, following Wednesday's subdued 10-year German Bunds auction, which nevertheless marked a sharp improvement from November, when the debt offering could have failed without purchases from the Euro-

"Europe still lacks a credible mechanism to rekindle growth, and without growth the crisis can only intensify."

RUSSELL JONES, ANALYST AT WESTPAC BANK

pean Central Bank.

A litmus test for investor confidence is next week's debt sales by Spain and Italy, the two big economies seen as most at risk from the crisis that has already dragged down Greece, Ireland and Portugal.

"The French bond sale is probably not as big a risk but Italy is a different story," said Fujii.

Funding concerns were highlighted on Wednesday, when Italy's UniCredit SpA launched a 7.5 billion euro (\$9.68 billion) rights issue at a huge discount, reflecting the difficulty some European lenders are facing to raise capital to repair their weakened balance sheet.

As investors also focused on economic data,

US stocks fared better than European peers on Wednesday after new US factory goods orders rose solidly in November while business capital spending cooled.

"Europe still lacks a credible mechanism to rekindle growth, and without growth the crisis can only intensify," said Russell Jones, analyst at Westpac Bank.

Asia Bond Market

Asian credit markets eased a tad, with spreads on the iTraxx Asia ex-Japan investment grade index widening by 2 basis points.

Issuance activity is picking up, however, with the Philippines becoming Asia's first issuer of for-

eign-currency sovereign bonds, saying yesterday it raised \$1.5 billion from the sale of 2037 global bonds. A quarter each were sold to investors from the Philippines and the rest of Asia, with the United States taking over a third and Europe, 15 per cent.

The Export-Import Bank of Korea, which raised \$2.25 billion in global bonds also early yesterday, aims to raise \$11 billion mostly in bonds abroad this year by exploring non-dollar markets, up from \$10.3 billion it raised last year.

"The acute problem that the European area is having at the moment is causing investors to look to diversify their risk," said Kenneth Akintewe, Singapore-based portfolio manager at Aberdeen Asset Management, who helps manage Asian fixed income.

The Asian bond

market may be supported by appetite from the region's big institutional players as well as a favourable macro backdrop, with policymakers generally shifting gear to pro-growth from an anti-inflationary stance, he said.

The currency risk is key, as hedging costs rise with higher volatility, and while volatility is here to stay, market players may have adjusted somewhat from the past year's turbulence.

"The market is now aware of what kind of risk factors they have to contend with, which provides a little bit of a buffer in terms of the degree of the sell-off we can anticipate now," said Akintewe.

"We need to actually see things that are even worse than last year taking place to see the market sell-off to the same degree as seen in the past several months." — **REUTERS**

Japan Airlines aims to raise at least \$6.5 billion in relisting

TOKYO — Japan Airlines plans to raise more than 500 billion yen (US\$6.5 billion) ahead of re-listing its shares as early as September, a source with knowledge of the matter said, marking a sharp turnaround for the carrier following its bankruptcy in 2010.

A government-backed fund overseeing the airline's restructuring has said it would aim to recoup its 350 billion yen investment through a public offering by January 2013, three years after it went under with 2.3 trillion yen in debts.

The public offering is expected to rank as Japan's largest since Dai-ichi Life Insurance raised 1 trillion yen in 2010, and will likely be carried out against a backdrop of tough industry competition and sluggish economic growth.

The state-backed fund, the Enterprise Turnaround Initiative Corp of Japan (ETIC), is looking at a September to December window to re-list the stock in Tokyo, according to the source, who was not authorised to speak publicly about the deal.

"The valuation will be influenced a lot on the level of global stock prices, and right now it's very unclear how stock markets will perform over the next 6 months or so,"

the source said, adding that 500 billion yen was seen as a minimum target for the offering to get a decent return on taxpayer funds.

Nomura Holdings Inc and Daiwa Securities Group Inc were selected by the ETIC as global coordinators for the public offering in August, a Japan Airlines spokesman said. He declined to comment on the potential size of the share sale.

The carrier emerged from bankruptcy last March after slashing 16,000 jobs, cutting pension benefits and paring its international and domestic routes, and logged a record operating profit of 188.4 billion yen for the 2010 financial year.

Japan Airlines' recovery has been built almost entirely on cost-cutting and comes in the face of high fuel prices and a sluggish global economy, which has crimped travel demand.

Those tough conditions drove American Airlines to file for bankruptcy protection in November, highlighting just how quickly an airline's fortunes can change.

American had offered to invest in Japan Airlines, its partner in the Oneworld Alliance, when the Japanese carrier was heading into bankruptcy in late 2009. — **REUTERS**

Asian banks battle for RBS Aviation

HONG KONG — China Development Bank and Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group are slugging it out in the final days of an auction to buy Royal Bank of Scotland's aircraft leasing business in a deal that could fetch up to US\$7.5 billion, a source with direct knowledge of the matter said yesterday.

RBS, 83 per cent-owned by the British government, is shedding the RBS Aviation Capital business as part of its effort to sell off parts to pay back a 2008 bailout.

The RBS Aviation auction reaches its final stages as

RBS begins a larger process to pare back the size of the bank. Reuters reported on Wednesday that RBS has hired Lazard to advise it on scaling back its global investment banking arm.

For the RBS Aviation auction, a decision on the winner is expected by early next week, the source said, with a sale price in a range of \$7.3 billion to \$7.5 billion.

US bank Wells Fargo and a consortium led by Australian investment bank Macquarie are no longer in the race, said the source, who was not authorised to speak to the

media. RBS declined comment, while SMFG and CDB officials were not immediately available to comment. Goldman Sachs, which is advising RBS, also declined to comment.

RBS Aviation is one of the world's top five commercial airline leasing firms - it owns, manages or has orders for 466 aircraft, industry sources and analysts have said. The RBS Aviation sale comes as US insurer AIG prepares to float its much larger ILFC leasing unit, though plans for that IPO have been postponed.

Aircraft leasing is seen as attractive as it offers steady demand and steady cash flows.

In a 452-page report released last month, Britain's market regulator criticised RBS for its massive purchase of Dutch bank ABN Amro, a deal credited with triggering RBS's near-collapse.

Under former Chief Executive Fred Goodwin, RBS came within hours of running out of cash in October 2008, and was only saved by a 45 billion pound (\$70.3 billion) taxpayer bailout. — **REUTERS**

Fiat boosts its share of Chrysler

DETROIT — Fiat has added 5 per cent to its majority ownership of Chrysler.

The Italian automaker got the added stake by making a car in the US that gets 40 miles per gallon of gas.

With the added shares, Fiat now owns 58.5 per cent of Chrysler.

The US government, which bailed out Chrysler and funded its 2009 restructuring under bankruptcy protection, gave Fiat a 20 per cent stake in Chrysler in July of 2009 in exchange for Fiat's management expertise

and use of its technology. Fiat gradually raised its ownership by meeting performance goals and buying the government's stake in Chrysler.

Chrysler said early yesterday that a pre-production version of the new Dodge Dart compact got 40 mpg in testing by the Environmental Protection Agency in late December. Full testing for the mileage sticker that will go on the Dart's window has not been finished. The window sticker testing is done under different standards and could be

lower than 40 mpg.

The added 5 per cent stake came from shares held by a United Auto Workers trust fund that pays for retiree health care. The trust still owns 41.5 per cent of the company. Chrysler is planning an initial public stock offering, perhaps this year, to help the trust convert its shares to cash.

The Dart, to be built at a factory in Belvidere, Illinois, goes on sale in the first half of this year as a 2013 model. It will be unveiled next week

at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. It's based on the same underpinnings as an Alfa Romeo Giulietta.

One of the Dart's three engines will be a Fiat-designed 1.4-liter turbocharged powerplant that also goes into a high-performance version of the Fiat 500.

Sergio Marchionne, CEO of both Fiat and Chrysler, said in a statement that the added 5 per cent stake is another step in the integration of the two companies. — **AP**

Stock market slump...

FROM PAGE 17

based on NAV instead of market prices for rated funds.

By focusing on the NAV ratings, Woori CBV is also building new index products, called the Viet Nam Mutual Fund Index family. The index family is

calculated to reflect price movements of listed mutual funds both inside and outside Viet Nam.

Funds are categorised into different groups based on incorporated locations (foreign, domestic, offshore), amount of assets

under management (small, medium, large), investment style (aggressive, moderate, conservative) and sector. Funds specialised in debt have also been included in the index family for the first time. — **VNS**

BRIEFS

British explorer Cove for sale

LONDON — British explorer Cove Energy Plc has put itself up for sale, raising the prospect of a deal that analysts said could be worth some US\$1 billion and would test big oil companies' interest in the emerging gas basins of east Africa.

Cove shares traded up 8.4 per cent at 122 pence by 0844 GMT after hitting a record 127.75p.

"We see this as a positive move that will reduce concerns that Cove might wait too long to monetise its Mozambique assets and have to raise further funding in mid-2012 to meet increasing capex (capital expenditure) requirements of the project," Michael Alsford, oil analyst at Citigroup, said in a research note.

JJB Sports says trading improves

LONDON — British sportswear retailer JJB Sports said trading improved in its second half and it achieved a Christmas outcome in line with expectations that were revised down after an October profit warning.

Wigan, northwest England-based JJB, which counts America's richest man Bill Gates among its major shareholders, said yesterday sales at stores open over a year increased 5 per cent in the four weeks to December 26, while cash gross margin rose 6 per cent.

That performance meant like-for-like sales for the 47 weeks to December 26 fell 13.5 per cent, with cash margin down 20.8 per cent.

Boeing to close Wichita plant

WICHITA — The Boeing Co, for decades the brand that helped support Wichita's claim as the aviation capital of the world, announced on Wednesday it will shut down facilities in the city by the end of 2013 and send work to plants in three other states as it deals with defense spending cutbacks.

The closure will cost 2,160 workers their jobs and end the firm's presence in an area where it has been a major employer for generations.

The decision was not a surprise because Boeing said in November it was looking at closing the Wichita plant. But it still drew an angry response from Kansas lawmakers who refuelling tanker project in February and had expected thousands of jobs to come to Wichita with it. Instead, the tanker work will go to Boeing's facilities near Seattle.

Yahoo names PayPal chief as CEO

SAN FRANCISCO — Yahoo Inc named PayPal President Scott Thompson as its chief executive on Wednesday, hoping the well-regarded internet technology and e-commerce expert will replicate his success at eBay Inc and turn around the struggling company.

Thompson, credited with driving growth at eBay's online payments division PayPal, joins Yahoo during a period of turmoil, as the company plows ahead with a strategic review in which discussions have included the possibility of being sold, taken private or broken up.

Thompson, a former Visa payments software platform designer, joins the company four months after the firing of previous CEO Carol Bartz as the one-time Web powerhouse Yahoo struggles to compete with newer heavyweights Google Inc and Facebook. — AP/AFP/REUTERS

Bad debt to hamper Spanish banks

MADRID — Spain's new economy minister said yesterday banks may face up to 50 billion euros (US\$65 billion) in bad loans and he vowed to crack down on regional deficits in a new austerity drive.

Economy Minister Luis de Guindos' estimate of the banks' bad loans, provided in an interview with the *Financial Times*, was higher than many private forecasts.

De Guindos' comments revealed the scale of the challenges confronting the new right-leaning government: a troubled financial sector, bulging public deficit, and feeble

economy with high joblessness.

"If you take international valuations as in the case of Ireland, at the most you are talking about the need for 50 billion euros of extra provisions (for Spanish banks)," De Guindos said.

"In the great majority of cases, they can provide it themselves from their profits, and it could be done not in one year but over several years."

The banks loaned huge amounts of money during the property bubble, which imploded in 2008 leaving them holding piles of doubtful loans and devalued real estate assets.

The property crash also destroyed millions of jobs, leaving Spain with an unemployment rate of 21.5 per cent, and sent the economy into a slump from which it has yet to recover.

Banks are now being pressed by new rules forcing them to boost levels of rock-solid core capital, and by the weak economy, which makes it tougher to turn a profit.

De Guindos' warning came as Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's cabinet met to decide on austerity measures to help meet a target of slashing the deficit to 4.4 per cent of gross domestic product in 2012.

Spain is set to miss its tar-

get of reducing the public deficit from 9.3 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 6 per cent in 2012, with a final figure possibly topping 8 per cent, the government says.

That overshoot could add another 20 billion euros to the required austerity measures, now estimated at 16.5 billion euros, according to the Popular Party government, which won power in November 20 elections.

Last week, the government announced budget amounting to 8.9 billion euros, and tax increases, including on salaries and on capital income, to bring in another 6.275 billion euros. — AFP

Recession looms over UK, despite pick-up in services

"Nonetheless, the UK is still very vulnerable to the eurozone sovereign debt crisis given trade, financial and confidence linkages."

JAMES KNIGHTLEY, ING ECONOMIST

LONDON — Britain's economy remains at risk of recession despite a surprise pick-up in activity among services firms in December, as the spill-over from the eurozone crisis looms large and banks look set to tighten credit.

The unexpected jump in the Markit/CIPS Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the service sector to 54 in December from 52.1 the month before provides some hope that the country may just skirt a recession for now.

But the Bank of England's quarterly credit conditions survey — also released yesterday — showed that banks expected to apply stricter credit criteria and saw credit demand dwindling across the board.

With the eurozone debt crisis unresolved, and consumer spending under pressure from tough government spending cuts and soaring prices, the central bank is still expected to add more stimulus in the form of asset purchases soon.

The services PMI's rise to the highest level since July countered expectations for a fall. The unexpected bounce comes after the construction PMI showed a slight pick-up in growth in December and the contraction in manufacturing slowed.

"The PMIs have all surprised on the upside and offer some hope that there is still life in the

UK economy," said ING economist James Knightley.

"Nonetheless, the UK is still very vulnerable to the eurozone sovereign debt crisis given trade, financial and confidence linkages," he said. "We doubt the UK will be able to avoid a return to recession, albeit a mild one."

Gilt futures fell slightly after the PMI data, though the improvement did little to change markets' views that the central bank will pump an extra 50 billion pounds of quantitative easing funds into the economy in February.

Services were likely to have expanded by around 0.3-0.4 per cent in the final quarter, said Markit chief economist Chris Williamson. However, the combined PMIs posted their weakest quarter since the second quarter of 2009, when Britain was still in deep recession, he said, adding that the economy had probably stagnated in final quarter of 2011.

The BoE predicts a stagnation until mid-2012, though some policymakers have warned the

economy may shrink for one or two quarters. A slump in industrial and services output in October had indicated a weak start to the fourth quarter.

Retailers have been suffering from consumers' restraint, painting a bleak picture for the coming months as Britons look set to cut back further after some indulgence for Christmas.

"Consumers will increasingly look for value in these difficult times," said the chief executive of McBride, Europe's biggest maker of retailer own-brand cleaning products, after it reported a rise in revenue in the six months to December.

Banks warned in the BoE's credit conditions survey that the euro crisis could drive up their funding costs and hit credit supply.

The lenders already expect to tighten lending conditions and predict falling credit demand across the board after recording a sharp slump in demand from small firms in the fourth quarter. — REUTERS

Consumer woes weigh on France

PARIS — French consumer expenditure, linchpin of an economy that depends far more on domestic demand than its export-propelled neighbour Germany, could falter further in the coming weeks, according to a two reports published yesterday.

With morale at its lowest in three years and unemployment claims at their highest in 12 years, economic prospects are dim as President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative government prepares to raise tax in a policy U-turn just over three months from an election.

His own prospects will hardly benefit either from relentless news headlines of the threat to France's debt market rating and job losses at companies such as ferry operator SeaFrance and a closure threat at a Petroplus oil refinery.

A monthly report from statistics office INSEE said consumer morale held steady in December but at its weakest since December 2008 when the country was heading into recession along with much of the industrialised world.

"One interpretation is that French consumers have not recovered from the subprime crisis, which triggered the worst recession since the Second World War and has now turned into a sovereign debt crisis," said Marion Labouré, economist at Barclays Capital Research. A survey by polling outfit TNS Sofres showed that 67 per cent of respondents, or roughly two in three people, think they will have to cut back on spending in the coming months, primarily on holidays and entertainment and then on clothes. — REUTERS

Americans expected to buy more cars in 2012

DETROIT — Strong sales in December capped off a great year for US carmakers, especially Chrysler, and 2012 should be even better.

For their biggest Japanese rivals, a year of natural disasters and other struggles ended on a sour note, with US sales falling and the outlook for next year just as challenging.

Chrysler Group, in the midst of a comeback after its 2009 trip through bankruptcy court, said on

Wednesday that sales surged 37 per cent in December and 26 per cent for all of 2011. Demand was particularly strong for the Jeep Grand Cherokee and the Chrysler 200. Chrysler catapulted itself ahead of Honda Motor Co as the fourth-largest automaker by sales in the US.

General Motors Co and Ford Motor Co ended the year with more modest double-digit percentage gains. Analysts say US car

sales rose for the second year in a row as buyers' confidence in the economy picked up, their aging vehicles wore down and their ability to take out cheap loans improved.

US auto sales rose 10 per cent to 12.8 million in 2011. That's up 22 per cent from 2009, when the US auto industry and the financial system were in peril.

November and December were the strongest months of the year for US

auto sales, and analysts expect the momentum to continue into 2012. Improving employment numbers, low interest rates and building demand to replace older cars should all boost 2012 sales.

GM's December sales rose 5 per cent, resulting in a 13 per cent bump for the year, while Ford's December sales climbed 10 per cent, closing out an 11 per cent gain for 2011.

Nissan Motor Co, which

recovered more quickly than its rivals from the March earthquake and tsunami in Japan, was the only major Japanese automaker to sell more cars in the US in 2011. Its sales surged nearly 8 per cent in December and 15 per cent for the year. Nissan's Leaf electric car also outsold GM's Chevrolet Volt in the cars' first full year on the market. Nissan sold 9,674 Leafs, beating the Volt by just over 2,000. — AP

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HCM City artists record Tết album for soldiers

HCM CITY — A new album featuring songs by 150 famous singers in HCM City will send Tết (Lunar New Year) festival greetings to soldiers stationed on islands across Việt Nam as part of a special cultural programme.

Titled *Mùa Xuân Biển Đảo* (Spring on Islands), the album consists of songs about the country, peace, love, spring and the bravery of soldiers, composed mostly by veteran musicians and song writers.

A few highlights in the album include: Trần Long Ẩn's *Lá Thư Ngày Tết* (The Letter to Mother on Tết); Tôn Thất Lập's *Tình Ca Mùa Xuân* (Love Song for Spring); Trần Tiến's *Mùa Xuân Gọi* (Spring's Sounds); and Phạm Đăng

Khuông's *Trường Sa Trường Sa* (Spratly Islands).

"I'm very happy to sing for our soldiers. My family, friends and I will enjoy a happy Tết, thanks to them," said pop star Siu Black, who spent hours in the studio to record her voice for the album.

Young singers like Bảo Thi and Dương Triệu Vũ also worked hard to complete the album.

More than 1,000 copies of the album will be sent to troops stationed on the nation's island outposts.

"Together with the DVD, our artists and young volunteers have made greeting cards and gift-wrapped confectionery and other presents to send to the soldiers," said Quỳnh Hoa, head of the HCM City Youth Cultural House's cul-

ture and arts office.

Last weekend, a music gala at the HCM City Youth Culture House attracted 120 singers, emcees, *cải lương* (renovated opera) performers, and movie and theatre actors like Thành Lộc, Quế Trân, Thoại Mỹ, and Ngô Thanh Vân.

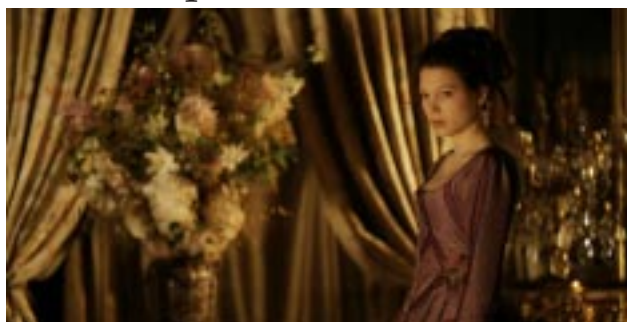
The singers performed their best items and also conversed online with soldiers on Trường Sa Island and oil rig protection post No1 (DK1). More than 1,000 youngsters joined the event. — VNS

Out of the black: Veteran singer Siu Black is among 150 celebrities in HCM City who have lent their voices to the album *Mùa Xuân Biển Đảo*. — File Photo



Berlin fest to open with French drama

Revolution:
A scene in the French period drama *Les Adieux à la Reine* (Farewell My Queen) which will open the 2012 Berlin film festival. — File Photo



LONDON — The 2012 Berlin film festival will open next month with the world premiere of French period drama *Les Adieux à la Reine* (Farewell My Queen).

Directed by Benoît Jacquot, the drama is an adaptation of Chantal Thomas's novel of the same name portraying the first days of the French Revolution from the point of view of servants working at Versailles.

Diane Kruger plays the ill-fated

queen Marie Antoinette and Lea Seydoux one of her ladies-in-waiting as unrest in the court of King Louis XVI grows.

Although the February 9-19 cinema showcase opens this year with a world premiere, an absence of major Hollywood names on the red carpet could dampen media interest.

Last year the festival, now in its 62nd year, kicked off with the acclaimed Coen brothers Western

True Grit, although it had already opened in US theatres by that time.

On February 14 this year, Meryl Streep, firm favourite for a best actress Oscar for her portrayal of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in *The Iron Lady*, will be in Berlin to receive a lifetime achievement award.

The festival will screen some of her best-known movies, including *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Sophie's Choice* and *Out of Africa*. — REUTERS

Calligraphers fight battle of brushes

TOKYO — From small children to octogenarians, thousands came together in Tokyo yesterday for a new year's battle of the brushes in an annual national calligraphy contest.

In what has long been a ritual for the start of the year, people all across Japan write down their resolutions and hopes, or good luck characters, using a traditional horse-hair brush and ink made of charcoal.

This year's contestants brushing their welcome to the Year of the Dragon included children from

Fukushima prefecture, which is still struggling with the world's worst nuclear crisis in 25 years, set off by last year's massive earthquake and tsunami.

"I wasn't sure if I would be able to write well, but I did better than I thought so I think it's good," said Natsumi Yazawa, a 14-year-old from Fukushima who travelled hundreds of kilometres to take part.

Contestants, who ranged from those aged four all the way up to 85, were assigned Chinese characters such as *Spring Wing* and *Year of the Dragon* and given 24 min-

utes to complete their masterpieces.

One of the older participants was Etsuko Saotome, who said she had looked forward to taking part as it gave her energy.

"I'll be 74, and while that's embarrassing, this gives me a chance to feel youthful again, writing with all of these children," she said.

The pieces were collected to be reviewed by judges according to rules such as their flow, line strength and angles. The winners will be announced on January 22. — REUTERS

Give slim kids higher marks, says nutritionist

PARIS — Pierre Dukan, the nutritionist behind the popular but controversial Dukan diet, has suggested that France tackle child obesity by giving extra exam marks for slimmess.

Dukan, who has sold 8 million copies of his diet book worldwide, made the proposal in a 250-page book called *An Open Letter to the Future President*, which he sent out on Tuesday to 16 candidates for France's presidential election.

The plan calls for high school students to be allowed to take a so-called "ideal weight" option in their final year exams, the "baccalaureat", under which they would earn extra points if they kept a body mass index (BMI) of between 18 and 25.

Those already overweight at the start of the two-year course would score double points if they managed to slim down over a period of two years.

"It's a fantastic motivator," Dukan said.

"The baccalaureat is really important in France. Kids want to get it, their parents want them to even more, so why not get them to work together on nutrition?"

Weight gain is becoming an increasing problem in France and experts say sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition are to blame.

World Health Organisation (WHO) figures show 50.7 per cent of the population were overweight in 2010, including 18.2 per cent classed as obese.

"There's a real problem. Since the 1960s the number of overweight people in France has risen from 500,000 to 22 million and

it's going up every year," Dukan said.

"When you reach those levels, it's no longer a health problem, it becomes a political problem, and the leaders of the nation need to worry about it."

As well as the suggestion for students, Dukan's book, which hit French bookshops yesterday, contains a further 119 suggestions for the future president on ways to fight obesity.

One idea is the creation of a French fast-food restaurant serving more nutritional versions of the ubiquitous burgers and fries.

Dukan has earned an international reputation as diet guru to the stars, although his methods have drawn criticism from some health experts and weightwatchers who say his high-protein meal plan causes fatigue, bad breath and dizziness. But he is also a committed campaigner for the promotion of healthier lifestyles.

He recently met executives from McDonald's France with a suggestion for a healthy "McDukan" burger, made with low-fat meat and with oatmeal bread instead of the usual white bun. Unfortunately, the giant food chain turned him down.

"They were interested, but they said the public wasn't quite ready for it yet," he said.

The BMI, obtained by dividing a person's weight by the square of their height, is used as an indicator of the proportion of body fat. The WHO defines a BMI of 18.5 to 25 as normal, 25 to 30 as overweight, and over 30 as obese. — REUTERS

TRAVELLERS NOTES

Cruise ship tourists arrive in Huế

The HCM City-based Saigontourist Travel Service Co provided services to more than 2,000 passengers and crew members of the *SuperStar Aquarius* which docked at Chân Mây Port in the central province of Thừa Thiên – Huế on December 31.

After they made a tour of Huế, the vessel left for Ha Long Bay on January 1.

The world heritage site also welcomed more than 300 passengers who came on board the cruise ship *Seabound Pride* on the same day.

Kiên Giang park attracts anglers

U Minh Thượng (Upper U Minh), a vast wetland rich in fish and water birds in the Mekong province of Kiên Giang, has become a tourist attraction, especially for anglers.

Declared a national park in 2000, the 21,100-ha U Minh Thượng has a 44-ha bird sanctuary with more than 70,000 birds and 500ha set aside for tourists to go fishing.

Tourists have to pay VNĐ40,000 (US\$2) for a ticket which includes admission to the fishing area, a rod, and bait, while an optional boat costs VNĐ30,000. If they catch any fish, they can ask locals for help to cook them right there with locally-grown vegetables.

One of the few protected tropical mangrove forests left in the world, the park is home to over 250 species of plants, 200 insects, 24 animals, and 180 birds, many of them rare and some in the red book of endangered creatures.

Huế monuments free for Tết

Visitors to Huế will get free admission to all monuments in the world heritage town during the three days of Tết (Lunar New Year) on January 23, 24 and 25.

The monuments include the Imperial Inner City, An Định Royal Palace, and the tombs of emperors Khải Định and Tự Đức.

"This is an annual promotion to offer local residents and visitors a chance to better enjoy Tết," deputy director of the Huế Centre for Monument Conservation, Phan Thanh Hải, said.

On normal days foreign visitors pay VNĐ55,000 for entry into the Imperial Inner City, while locals pay VNĐ35,000.

More Việt kiều to return home

The number of *Việt kiều* (Overseas Vietnamese) coming back home through HCM City for Tết this year is expected to increase significantly, according to the deputy head of the HCM City Committee for Overseas Vietnamese, Trần Hoa Phương.

He gave no figures but predicted a strong increase given the difficulty for people to book air tickets now despite an increase in the number of flights.

Last year during Tết around 400,000 overseas vietnamese arrived via the city's Tân Sơn Nhất Airport, according to the National Committee for Overseas Vietnamese.

Carrier offers cheap fare

New budget airline VietJetAir is offering seats priced at a mere VNĐ250,000 on flights from Hà Nội to HCM City between January 10 and 23 hoping to persuade people from the north to celebrate Lunar New Year in sunny HCM City. The tickets can be booked at www.vietjetair.com from January 4 to 8.

The private carrier will also increase the number of daily flights between the two cities to three from January 10 to meet rising demand from local and international tourists during Tết.

Two million City folk go on holiday

Around 2 million people from HCM City and neighbouring provinces went abroad on tours through the city's Tân Sơn Nhất Airport and the Mộc Bài border in Tây Ninh Province last year, according to figures from the city Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

South Korea was the favourite destination, followed by Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong, and China.

Competitive prices, low air fares offered by low-cost carriers, promotion campaigns, and simplified customs formalities are all enabling more people to travel abroad than ever before. — VNS

Rare treat for bird-lovers as storks flock to island sanctuary

Minh Hương

For thousands of years, the popularity and beauty of white storks have made them one of the cultural symbols of Việt Nam but city residents only have rare opportunities to see them these days as they isolate themselves in rural areas as urbanisation sets in.

Fortunately bird-lovers from Hà Nội can enjoy the sight of thousands of storks gathered together on an island in Hải Dương Province's Thanh Miện District, just 70km away from the urban metropolis.

Chi Lăng Island has been quietly attracting bird-watchers – around 15,000 annually – to this out-of-the-way part of the province since the early 1990s.

December is well-known as a great time for bird watchers here as the changing season heralds the arrival of tens of thousands of storks.

I pay VNĐ20,000 (US\$1) to join a boat ride with a group of others. Our guide, Nguyễn Đức Bàn, 68, says the island is primarily home to nine varieties of birds, including Chinese pond herons, jabirus, buff-backed and grey herons, and grey, blue and black bitterns, which stop off on their way to China, Myanmar, India and Nepal.

As legend has it, a sudden storm damaged a dyke in the 15th century and the resulting flood transformed the rice fields within into a deep lake and turned the local temple into the small island. Locals came to believe the lake is holy and never do any thing to harm it nor the creatures that make it their home. As time has passed, an increasing number of storks and herons have come to stay on the island.



What are you looking at? Chi Lăng Island has been quietly attracting bird-watchers.

The best time to visit the island is either in the early morning or at sunset because these are when the birds typically shift their eating times.

The white storks generally leave their nests to seek food in the early morning when the grey herons return to their roosts after finding their fill. The reverse is true in the late afternoon when all the white storks return to their nests and the grey herons take off to forage again.

I fully enjoy watching the birds fly over our heads or land on the nearby trees under the golden shade of the sunset. Their gentle calls only add to the beautiful picture they make



Birds of a feather: Thousands of storks gather on the island

beneath the setting sun.

Storks choose Thanh Miện over other areas of the province because of the abundance of shrimp and fish, both wild and cultivated.

Local residents are aware of the tourism potential the birds present so they do their best to protect them rather than hunt them for meat. Bàn says some people even let the storks eat fish from their ponds.

Storks collect straw and other grasses to build their nests in bamboo and eucalyptus trees. They lay eggs four separate times between September to April each year, with six eggs each time. After 25 days of incubating, a small stork is born. After a short 60 days of being fed and trained to fly by

their parents, the young storks are able to search for food independently. Bàn tells me there are currently about 10,000 storks and 7,000 night herons.

In the past, storks typically limited their stay at the lake to between September to April, but now they live here throughout the year. The growing population has put pressure on the bamboo trees in the area, so locals are thinking about planting more trees to meet their needs.

Like many other people here, Bàn loves the birds but he is worried about how to ensure that their development is sustainable, saying "If there are too many birds, I don't really think we have enough space and food to accommodate them." — VNS



Motherly love: Storks generally leave their nests to seek food in the early morning. — VNA/VNS Photos Trương Vj

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In the Limelight

French pianist Richard Clayderman performs during a New Year concert in Shantou City, south China's Guangdong Province, on Tuesday.

23

Cambodia's 'second Angkor' stirs

Banteay Chhmar is more frozen in time than the manicured, made-over superstar

BANTEAY CHHMAR, Cambodia — It's still entwined in mystery and jungle vines, but one of Cambodia's grandest monuments is slowly awakening after eight centuries of isolated slumber, having attracted a crack archaeological team and a trickle of tourists.

"It takes awhile to unfold this temple and everywhere there are enticements," says John Sanday, the team leader, as he navigates through tangled undergrowth, past dramatic towers and bas-reliefs and into dark chambers of the haunting monastic complex of Banteay Chhmar.

What drove Jayavarman VII, regarded as the greatest king of the Angkorian Empire, to erect this vast Buddhist temple about 170km from his capital in Angkor and in one of the most desolate and driest places in Cambodia remains one of its many unsolved riddles.

At its height in the 12th century, the empire extended over much of Southeast Asia, its rulers engaging in a building frenzy which produced some of the world's greatest religious monuments.

Called the "second Angkor Wat", Banteay Chhmar approaches it in size, is more frozen in time than the manicured and made-over superstar, and has so far been spared the blights of mass tourism of recent years at Angkor.

In 2011, an average of 7,000 tourists a day visited Angkor, one of Asia's top tourist draws located near the booming north-western city of Siem Reap. Banteay Chhmar saw an average of two a day, with no tour buses and bullhorn-wielding guides to disturb the temple's tranquillity or traditional life in the surrounding village.

Abandoned for centuries, then cut off from the world by the murderous Khmer Rouge, Banteay Chhmar didn't welcome visitors until 2007, when the last mines were cleared and the looting that plagued the defenceless temple in the 1990s was largely halted.

A year later, the California-based Global Heritage Fund began work at the site under the



Sleeping giant: The haunting monastic complex of Banteay Chhmar is slowly awakening after eight centuries of isolated slumber. — File Photo

overall control of the country's Ministry of Culture and now spends about US\$200,000 a year on the project.

Sanday, a veteran British conservation architect, assembled a team of 60 experts and workers, some of whom were with him on an earlier restoration of the Preah Khan temple at Angkor. Others were recruited from the surrounding community and although barely literate, Sanday says they're among the best he's worked with in Asia.

Challenging them are hundreds of thousands of stone blocks from collapsed shrines and galleries scattered helter-skelter within the 12 sq.km archaeological site. Towers teeter, massive tree roots burrow into walls, vegetation chokes a wide moat girding the temple.

Three-quarters of the bas-reliefs—rarely found at other Angkorian temples—have fallen or been looted, the most notable being eight panels depicting Avalokitesvara, an enlightened being embodying Buddhist compassion.

Thieves sheared off four panels with jackhammers. A pair has been recovered and the others are still at the temple, although

only two still stand.

"We've been struggling away with this gallery for nearly two years now," says Sanday at another bas-relief, one depicting a figure believed to be Jayavarman VII leading his troops into battle. In vivid detail, the ancient sandstone wall springs to life with charging war elephants, soldiers plunging spears into their enemies and crocodiles gobbling up the dead.

Nature and time have proved the culprits: the vaulting protecting the 30m relief collapsed, exposing the wall to monsoon torrents, which seeped downwards to wash away the masonry and loosen the foundations. Pressure from the weight above toppled sections of the wall or forced it to lean.

"He's going to have to come down," says the 68-year-old architect of the king's image. A section of the wall is angled dangerously outward, he explains, so it must be dismantled, the foundations reinforced and the sandstone blocks meticulously numbered, charted, then set back into place.

Nearby, two young Cambodian computer whizzes are pioneering a shortcut to the reassembly process through three-dimensional imaging. The work-in-progress is one of the temple's 34 towers re-

cently damaged in a severe storm.

Some 700 stone blocks from the tower have been removed or collected from where they fell and each one will be photographed from every angle. Since like a human fingerprint, no stone is exactly alike, still-to-be-finalised software should be able to fit all the blocks into their original alignment after they are repaired.

"We hope that with one push of the button all the stones will jump into place to solve what we are calling 'John's puzzle,'" says Sanday.

When an original block has gone missing or is beyond repair, either an original stone from elsewhere on the site is used or, as a last resort, a new stone will be inserted.

"My philosophy is to preserve and present the monuments as I found them for future generations without falsifying their history. So often people tend to guess what was there," he says.

The Global Heritage Fund, he says, is also intent on involving the community. "We can't protect Banteay Chhmar. They have to be the protectors. So they must gain some revenue from the temple," Sanday says. — AP

LOCAL LOWDOWN

Long holiday increases demand for foreign tours, say agents

HCM CITY — Travel agencies in HCM City have been kept busy booking foreign tours as residents seek to take advantage of a nine-day Tết (Lunar New Year) holiday.

The number of bookings for foreign tours offered by major companies like Saigontourist, Vietravel and Fiditour have increased between 20 and 30 per cent compared with last year's Tết season.

Most customers are buying tours to Asian countries and to Europe, the companies say.

"Longer holidays give people more time to travel," said Nguyễn Thị Tuyết Mai, head of Fiditour's External Affairs Office.

Fiditour's tours to Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and China are fully booked, she said.

A six-day tour to Thailand offered by the city's tourism agencies costs about VNĐ8 million (US\$381), cheaper than six-day tours from HCM City to northern provinces that cost between VNĐ11 million and VNĐ12 million.

Bookings of domestic tours have only increased slightly compared to last year's Tết. However, travel agencies say Vietnamese people do not typically plan holidays much ahead of time or book tours in advance.

The prices of domestic tours will remain unchanged for those who have bought the package before December 31, 2011, but since the beginning of this year, they have increased by about 23 per cent because of the hike in domestic airfares.

First Vietnamese film screened on Star Movies Asia



HÀ NỘI — Star Movies will screen the Vietnamese blockbuster *Bảy Rong* (Clash) in Asia on Saturday night.

The Vietnamese action movie, featuring Veronica Ngô and Johnny Trí Nguyễn, will be the first Vietnamese movie to be shown on Star Movies.

The film's plot involves devoted mother Trinh (Ngô) racing to complete a series of treacherous missions in order to get her kidnapped daughter back from a dangerous crime lord.

Determined to complete her final assignment without complications, Trinh assembles a group of dangerous criminals who know no fear.

That group includes Quân (Nguyễn), a mysterious loner who's as handsome as he is dangerous. When Trinh starts to fall for Quân as they prepare for battle, the momentary distraction threatens to have tragic repercussions.

With a budget of US\$1.5 million, the movie was released for the 2009 Christmas season and earned about \$600,000 after three weeks.

Clash has been screened at many international film festivals around the world including Tribeca Film Festival; Warsaw Film Festival and Berlin Fantasy Filmfest.

The movie will screen at 9:25pm on Saturday. — VNS

Polish artist hangs own painting in museum

WARSAW — Art student Andrzej Sobiepan didn't want to wait decades for his work to appear in museums. So he took matters in his own hands, covertly hanging one of his paintings in a major Polish gallery.

By Wednesday, the young artist was getting plenty of attention after a nationwide TV channel reported on his stunt at the National Museum in the southwestern city of Wrocław. He said

he hoped galleries would give more exhibition space to young artists as a result.

"I decided that I will not wait 30 or 40 years for my works to appear at a place like this," Sobiepan said. "I want to benefit from them here and now."

Sobiepan, a Wrocław Fine Arts Academy student whose last name means "his own master", said he was inspired by the elusive British graffiti artist known

only as Banksy. His own painting is small, white and green, and partly uses swine leather to show a drooping acacia leaf.

On December 10, Sobiepan put it up in a room with contemporary Polish art when a guard at the museum was looking the other way. Museum officials didn't notice the new painting for three days.

Museum director Mariusz Hermansdorfer said on Wednesday that the action revealed some

security breaches, but that he also considered it a "witty artistic happening".

"It has shown that the young generation of artists, unlike their predecessors, wants to see their works in museums," Hermansdorfer said.

The museum has kept the painting on display in its cafe. It will be offered for sale at Poland's biggest charity auction on Sunday. — AP

GOURMET'S CORNER



The Italian restaurant&lounge Angelina in the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, 15 Ngõ Quyền Street, presents a five-course menu created by chef Egidio Latoraca this winter. The menu consists of handcrafted spaghetti alla chitarra, pan-seared foie gras, pan-fried imported turbo fish and tasty desserts. Drawing inspiration from classic Italian dishes, in-house Chef Egidio makes his cuisine light, fresh and innovative. Available until Jan 31.

Hotel Nikko Hanoi

84 Trần Nhân Tông St, Tel: (04) 38223535

La Brasserie

- Weekday lunch buffet, Mon-Fri, VND530,000/person.
- Weekday dinner buffet, Mon-Thu, VND600,000/person.
- "Wine&Dine" dinner buffet on Fri night features international seafood buffet with wine.
- Weekend seafood dinner buffet, Sat&Sun, lunch at VND600,000/person, dinner at VND700,000/person.
- Authentic Vietnamese buffet with signature dishes from the North, Central, and South with Chilean wine to pair with, VND700,000/person, till Jan 31.
- Good Luck Dish for Tết: Yee Sang consisting of raw salmon, salad, crackers, jelly fish, available from Jan 21-Feb 6.

Tao-Li

- Weekend dim sum lunch buffet, Sat&Sun, VND350,000/ person.
- Luxury Pot consists of premium ingredients including abalone and scallop, available throughout Jan.

Benkay

- Monthly Kaiseki set menu for lunch&dinner, VND2,012,000/ person.
- Thread-sail filfish being served in three ways: sashimi, grill and hotpot. Available for lunch&dinner, throughout Jan.

Hilton Hà Nội Opera

1 Lê Thánh Tông St, Tel: (04) 39305050

Chez Manon

- Enjoy and experience newly launched blackboard menus of Hilton culinary team featuring premium Australian beef paired with Zinfandel wine or savour the exquisite 5-course menu for a good beginning, daily from 6-10pm, VND600,000+/- person.

Café Opera

- Enjoy a selection of premium Tết hampers includes homemade cookies, Belgian chocolate, exquisite tea combined with wines and other special things prepared for this occasion. Available from Jan 10-26, starting price from VND950,000.

Moevenpick Hotel Hà Nội

FILM

(DV: Dubbed in Vietnamese, VS: Vietnamese Subtitle, ES: English Subtitle, VN: Vietnamese Film; B/W: Black and White; OV: Original Version)

HÀ NỘI

MegaStar Cineplex

191 Bà Triệu St, Tel: (04) 39743333

- My Week with Marilyn (US, VS)
- Spellbound (Rok, VS)
- The Darkest Hour (2D, 3D) (US, VS)
- Flying Swords of Dragon Gate (3D) (Hong Kong, VS)
- Cột Mốc 23 (The 23rd Milestone) (VN)
- Alvin and the Chipmunk 3 (US, VS)
- Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol (US, VS)
- Tới Nay, 8 Giờ! (8 O'clock Tonight) (VN)

Platinum Cineplex

Level 4, Garden Shopping Centre, Mỹ Đình, Từ Liêm Tel: (04) 37878555

- Spellbound (Rok, VS)
- Flying Swords of Dragon Gate (3D) (Hong Kong, VS)
- Alvin and the Chipmunk 3 (US, VS)
- The Darkest Hour (US, VS)
- Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol (US, VS)
- Machine Gun Preacher (US, VS)
- Hoán Đổi Thân Xác (Change 2 Change) (VN)

August Cinema

45 Hàng Bài St, Tel: (04) 38253911

- The Darkest Hour (US, VS)
- Alvin and the Chipmunk 3 (US, VS)
- Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol (US, VS)
- Hoán Đổi Thân Xác (Change 2 Change) (VN)
- Tới Nay, 8 Giờ! (8 O'clock Tonight) (VN)

National Cinema Centre

87 Láng Hạ St, Tel: (04) 35147823

- My Week with Marilyn (US, VS)
- Spellbound (Rok, VS)
- The Darkest Hour (2D, 3D) (US, VS)
- Alvin and the Chipmunk 3 (US, VS)
- Flying Swords of Dragon Gate (3D) (Hong Kong, VS)
- Tới Nay, 8 Giờ! (8 O'clock Tonight) (VN)
- Machine Gun Preacher (US, VS)
- Hoán Đổi Thân Xác (Change 2 Change) (VN)

HCM CITY

Galaxy Nguyễn Du Cinema

116 Nguyễn Du St, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38235235

- Machine Gun Preacher (US, VS)
- Alvin and the Chipmunk 3 (US, VS)
- Flying Swords of Dragon Gate (3D) (Hong Kong, VS)

83A Lý Thường Kiệt St, Tel: (04) 38222800

Mangosteen Restaurant

- Mangosteen's semi buffet lunch offers a wide selection of refreshing salads and appetizers as well as irresistible desserts complimented with your choice of chef's grill selection or daily special pasta for main course. VND370,000+/- for semi buffet lunch, Mon-Fri, 11.30am-2.30pm.
- International Sunday brunch buffet includes a large chocolate dessert buffet, VND720,000+/-adult, VND360,000+/-child, including free flow of house wines, draught beer, soft drinks, hot&cold chocolate, 11.30am-2.30pm.

HCM CITY

New World Saigon Hotel

76 Lê Lai, District 1, Tel: (08) 38228888

Dynasty

- Family set menu features delicacies such as sucking pig, abalone, braised oysters with Chinese mushrooms or ostrich fillets with macadamia nuts, from VND672,000/person.

Hotel Equatorial

242 Trần Bình Trọng, Dist 5, Tel: (08) 3839777

Orientea Seafood Restaurant&Bar

- Lunar New Year celebration with set menu for 10 guests at VND6,388,000+/- for set 1, VND9,988,000+/- for set 2, VND16,888,000+/- for set 3.
- Yee Sang, a Malaysian traditional food to celebrate Lunar New Year, features raw fish delicacy from fresh salmon, sliced Australian abalone, fresh tuna or shark's fin, from VND188,000+/- person.

Windsor Plaza Hotel

18 An Dương Vương St, Dist 5, Tel: (08) 38336688

- Vietnamese and international lunch and dinner buffets feature salmon and prawn.

Café Central An Đông

- Succulent flavours of giant groupers double-boiled in herbal soup and delicious braised mutton with bean curd in clay pot, till Jan 19.

Caravelle Hotel

19 Lam Son Square, Dist 1, Tel: Tel: (08) 38234999

Lobby Lounge

- Pastry Persuasion features 7 varieties of Choux and Eclairs at VND160,000+/-portion.

Gartenstadt Restaurant

34 Đồng Khởi St, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38223623

- Exceptional tender juiciness of duck cooked in German style.

Duxton Hotel Saigon

63 Nguyễn Huệ Blvd, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38222999

The Grill Restaurant

- Lunch Roast Buffet – Choice of 2 Yummilicious roasts inclusive of soups, salads and coffee or tea with cookies, Mon-Fri.
- Afternoon Tea features a selection of fine teas with canapes, finger sandwiches, warmed snacks, french pastries, homemade chocolates, scones cream&h, 2-6pm.

Sheraton Saigon Hotel&Towers

88 Đồng Khởi St, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38272828

Mojito Cafe

- Special Sunday breakfast offers two eggs on toast or corn tảo (bread rice), with a yogurt dreamer smoothie or sliced seasonal fruit with yogurt, VND199,000+/-/set.

PERFORMANCE & EXHIBITION

HÀ NỘI

PERFORMANCE

Arts Performing Centre

16 Lê Thái Tổ St,

- VNSO New Year special concert *Haydn Night* features music by Johannes Brahms, Josef Haydn with conductor Honma Tetsuji, piano soloist Nguyễn Thái Vinh and the Việt Nam National Symphony Orchestra, at 8pm, Jan 11. Tickets cost VND200,000, 350,000, 500,000 and can be booked on www.ticketvn.com, or call 0913489858, 0983067996 for free delivery.

Music Publishing House

61 Lý Thái Tổ St, Tel: (04) 38256286

- Free symphony concert by artists from different music institutes including the Việt Nam Symphony Theatre. From 3-7pm on Sat, and from 10-12noon and 3-5pm on Sun, till Jan 15.

Bình Minh Jazz Club

3rd Fl, 65 Quán Sứ St, Tel: 39420400

- Live jazz performance every night from 9pm with Quyên Văn Minh and the Sông Hồng (Red River) jazz band, www.mhijazzvietnam.com

Thing Long Water Puppet Theatre

57B Đinh Tiên Hoàng St, Tel: 39364335

- Water puppet shows at 2.15pm, 3.30pm, 5pm, 6.30pm, 8pm, 9.15pm. Morning show at 9.30am is available only on Sun. Tickets: VND60,000, VND100,000.

Old House

87 Mã Mây St,

- *Ca trù* (ceremonial singing) show at 8pm everyday. Ticket: \$10.



EXHIBITION

Việt Art Centre

42 Vê Ký St,

- Exhibition *Trong/Ngoài/Inside/Outside* showcases large-size oil-on-canvas paintings by Đặng Thảo Ngọc, on-going.

Bùi Gallery

23 Ngõ Văn Sở St,

- Exhibition presents artworks by eight contemporary artists, till Jan 15.

National Museum of Vietnamese History

1 Tràng Tiền St,

- A collection of more than 140 valuable jade items is on display in the *Ancient Vietnamese Gems* exhibition, throughout Jan.

HCM CITY

PERFORMANCE

Opera House

7 Lam Son Square, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38299976

- Concert to celebrate New Year features music of Beethoven, Frank and Prokofiev, and comedic opera *H.M.S. Pinafore* by Arthur Sullivan and Gilbert, Jan 9.

Palace Hotel Sài Gòn

56-66 Nguyễn Huệ St, Dist 1

Tel: (08) 38292860

Calibre Charner

- Jazz singer Tuyết Loan performs from 8.30pm to 10.30pm every night.

Hotel Equatorial

242 Trần Bình Trọng, Dist 5

Tel: (08) 3839777

Flo Lobby Lounge

- Light jazz in vintage style features the band Esther Flatters and The Jazz Hats from Europe from 9pm.

Hard Rock Café

39 Lê Duẩn St, Dist 1

- *Party ater* Dark every Fri features Justin Murta and DJ Ioe.

Duxton Hotel

63 Nguyễn Huệ Blvd, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38222999

The Bar

- Pianist from 3-9.15pm, Mon-Sun.

Windsor Plaza Hotel

19 An Dương Vương St, Dist 5, Tel: 38336688

Sheraton Saigon Hotel&Towers

88 Đồng Khởi St, Dist 1, Tel: (08) 38272828

Night Spot

- The six-piece band Diesel performs nightly from Tue-Sun.

EXHIBITION

Galerie Ouyph

65 Đỗ Thám St, Dist 1

- Exhibition *Vẽ-a-vs* features art works by eight artists, till Jan 28.

Sân Art

3 Mã Linh St, Bình Thạnh Dist

- Group exhibition *Born from the Land* features two new installation works by Trần Châu và Đình Chung, and oil-on-canvas paintings by Anh Thảo, till Feb 2.

Thiên Sơn Plaza

800 Nguyễn Văn Linh Blvd, Dist 7

- 3D painting exhibition *World of Funny 3D Paintings*, till Feb 12.

Hotel Equatorial HCM City

242 Trần Bình Trọng, Dist 5, Tel: (08) 3839777

- Calligraphy exhibition displays water colours painted on dó (poanah) paper and delicate silk sheets by Canadian-Vietnamese Trương Chánh Trung, on-going.

WEATHER FORECAST January 6

Source: from the Weather Bureau

<p>Sơn La</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 8°C Max: 13°C</p>	<p>Lạng Sơn</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 12°C Max: 16°C</p>
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<p>Hà Nội</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 10°C Max: 15°C</p>	<p>Hải Phòng</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 10°C Max: 13°C</p>
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<p>Vinh</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 11°C Max: 15°C</p>	<p>Đà Nẵng</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 17°C Max: 23°C</p>
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<p>Pleiku</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 14°C Max: 27°C</p>	<p>Khánh Hoà</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 22°C Max: 29°C</p>
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<p>HCM City</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 22°C Max: 32°C</p>	<p>Cà Mau</p> <p>Temperature: Min: 25°C Max: 35°C</p>
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TELEVISION

<p>VNWS</p> <p>8:00 News</p> <p>8:20 News in Chinese</p> <p>9:15 Exploring Việt Nam</p> <p>9:45 News in English</p> <p>10:30 Science and Technology</p> <p>12:00 News</p> <p>13:15 Exploring Việt Nam</p> <p>15:15 Science and Technology</p> <p>16:20 Colourful World</p> <p>18:30 Reporters' Lens</p> <p>20:40 Sports Planet</p> <p>21:15 For Family's Happiness</p> <p>22:40 A Panorama of Culture</p> <p>23:00 News</p> <p>VTV4</p> <p>8:30 Daily Biz - Expat Living</p> <p>9:30 Film: History of the 1,000-year-old Capital (Ep 42)</p> <p>10:30 Rhythm of Life</p> <p>11:00 Hello Việt Nam</p> <p>12:00 News</p> <p>13:00 Arts and Life</p> <p>13:30 Film: Eve's Secret (Ep 61)</p> <p>14:30 Quiz: Way to Olympia Peak</p> <p>15:30 News in English</p> <p>16:30 Film: History of the 1,000-year-old Capital (Ep 42)</p> <p>17:25 News</p> <p>17:30 Arts and Life</p> <p>18:00 Chinese Programme</p> <p>20:00 Hello Việt Nam</p> <p>21:30 Daily Biz - Insight into Việt Nam</p> <p>22:35 Film: Eve's Secret (Ep 61)</p> <p>DISCOVERY</p> <p>8:00 In the Spotlight: Palm Oil</p> <p>9:00 The Detonators</p> <p>10:00 Swords</p> <p>11:00 Deadliest Catch</p> <p>13:00 Crimes That Shook the World 2</p> <p>14:00 In the Spotlight: Palm Oil</p> <p>15:00 American Chopper: Senior vs Junior</p> <p>16:00 Mean Machines: Transatlantic Challenge</p> <p>17:00 Deadliest Catch</p> <p>19:30 Deconstructed</p> <p>20:00 Building the Biggest</p> <p>21:00 Mythbusters 7</p> <p>22:00 Almost Got away with It 4</p> <p>23:00 Solved! Nightmare Next Door</p> <p>HBO</p> <p>8:50 Sabrina (1996)</p> <p>11:00 Temple Grandin</p> <p>12:45 Sundays at Tiffany's</p> <p>14:10 Did You Hear about the Morgans?</p> <p>15:50 Free Willy: Escape from Pirates Cove</p> <p>17:30 Cats&Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore</p> <p>18:00 Scott Pilgrim vs The World</p> <p>21:00 Van Helsing</p> <p>23:10 Frozen</p> <p>24:45 Wedding Crashers</p>	<p>STAR MOVIES</p> <p>8:20 Cheaper by the Dozen</p> <p>10:00 Dear John</p> <p>11:50 Tron: Legacy</p> <p>13:55 Striking Distance</p> <p>15:40 Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time</p> <p>17:40 The Marine 2</p> <p>19:15 The Expendables</p> <p>21:00 X-Men: The Last Stand</p> <p>22:45 Avatar</p> <p>MAX</p> <p>8:30 Watchmen</p> <p>11:00 Pottergeist III</p> <p>12:45 Star Trek (2009)</p> <p>15:00 The Night of the Generals</p> <p>17:20 Invasion of the Body Snatchers</p> <p>19:45 Blow Away</p> <p>21:00 Body Snatchers</p> <p>22:25 Watchmen</p> <p>24:45 Wild Geese II</p> <p>STAR WORLD</p> <p>9:30 Don't Stop Believing</p> <p>10:25 Junior MasterChef Australia</p> <p>11:20 Cougar Town</p> <p>11:45 How I Met Your Mother</p> <p>12:10 Switched At Birth</p> <p>13:05 American Idol Highlights (Edited Version)</p> <p>14:55 DC Cupcakes</p> <p>15:25 90210</p> <p>16:20 90210</p> <p>17:15 The Bachelor</p> <p>18:10 Hell's Kitchen</p> <p>19:05 How I Met Your Mother</p> <p>19:30 DC Cupcakes</p> <p>20:00 American Idol Highlights (Edited Version)</p> <p>21:50 America's Next Top Model</p> <p>22:45 Switched At Birth</p> <p>23:40 How I Met Your Mother</p> <p>ESPN</p> <p>8:00 Basketball</p> <p>10:00 Fitness</p> <p>10:30 Golf</p> <p>12:00 Football</p> <p>12:30 Road Racing</p> <p>13:00 Auto Racing</p> <p>13:30 Basketball</p> <p>15:30 Volleyball</p> <p>17:30 Basketball</p> <p>19:30 Sports News</p> <p>20:00 Football</p> <p>20:30 Olympics</p> <p>21:00 Magazine</p> <p>21:30 Auto Racing</p> <p>22:00 Sports News</p> <p>22:30 Football</p> <p>23:00 Olympics</p> <p>CARTOONS</p> <p>10:00 The Powerpuff Girls</p> <p>10:35 The Grim Adventures of Billy&Mandy</p> <p>11:10 Tom&Jerry Show</p> <p>14:30 Johnny Test</p>
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by Bill Watterson

PUZZLES**WONDERWORD**®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY**. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

ALL ABOUT COACH

Solution: 6 letters

S C P S B D K R I S T I N H T
I O O L O E Y R L E W E J E L
G L P E N E E T A S I L K E E
N L P H N R M (H) C K T C E L B
A E Y C I H C (A) P H O Y Y S O
T C R T E S R (T) D P E F L T O
U T O A C F T (S) W I R L F E T
R I T S A R E I C A S E S S S
E O C G P A X S C O G O L E L
H N A A E G T G G A S P N S A
T O F B V R U N U O T T O T E
A L L D O A R I C R L I O E R
E Y A N L N E R O L O C O P S
L N T A G C S L A D N A S N S
E S S H O E S F T T E L L A W

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Thursday's answer: Soul Surfer

SUDOKU

THE SAMURAI OF PUZZLES By The Mepham Group

Level: 1 2 3 4

				2		9		
1				7		8		3
	4	6					2	7
7		8					5	
			7		4			
	3					1		2
5	1					2	9	
4		2		1				5
		7		4				

SOLUTION TO THURSDAY'S PUZZLE


1/6/12

9	6	1	8	2	5	3	7	4
4	2	7	9	6	3	1	5	8
8	5	3	4	1	7	6	9	2
6	9	2	7	3	8	4	1	5
7	8	5	6	4	1	9	2	3
1	3	4	2	5	9	8	6	7
2	1	8	5	9	4	7	3	6
5	4	9	3	7	6	2	8	1
3	7	6	1	8	2	5	4	9

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit www.sudoku.org.uk

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FOOTBALL

Federation to impose limit on foreign players

HÀ NỘI — The Việt Nam Football Federation (VFF) will limit the number of foreign players in the national football league from 2013 to help boost opportunities for local football talent, the federation's vice chairman Phạm Ngọc Viễn said in an interview.

Each team in the Super League (formerly known as the V-League) will be limited to recruiting three foreign players from next year, and only two of them will be allowed to play for their team at any given time.

Teams in the lower First Division will not be allowed to hire any foreign players from 2013.

"The limit on foreign players in the First Division championship will provide young players more opportunities to compete," Viễn said. "The federation also requires teams in both the Super League and First Division to build their football training centres by 2014."

Viễn, who helped draw up Việt Nam's professional football system in 2001, added that each Second Division team will have to include three young squads for competition in youth championships from 2013.

The vice chairman said



Capping the numbers: Nigerian Timothy Anjembe of Hòa Phát Hà Nội plays in a V-League match at Hà Nội Stadium last year. — VNS Photo Quang Thắng

teams that have yet to set up their own youth squads would receive a fine of at least VNĐ200 million (\$10,000).

"We want teams to invest more in training young talent rather than

hiring foreign players or using training facilities abroad," he said.

There are over 100 foreign players playing for 28 teams in the Super League and First Division this year. — VNS

NATIONAL FOCUS

Local weightlifter in world top 3

Vietnamese weightlifter Trần Lê Quốc Toàn has ranked in the top three of the men's 56kg division following the latest rankings issued by the International Weightlifting Federation.

It's the highest ever ranking a Vietnamese weightlifter has reached in the men's division. Toàn had a successful year in 2011, bagging a host of medals including a gold in the Southeast Asian Games in Indonesia and a bronze medal in the World Weightlifting Championships in Paris last November.

The 27-year-old also won a bronze medal with a 125kg snatch in the World Weightlifting Championships, but finished fourth with a 275kg total lift. He beat his personal best in the SEA Games to win the gold medal with a 280kg total lift.

Thái wins stage at Bến Tre cycling

Đặng Thành Thái pushed through a final sprint yesterday to win the third stage of the Bến Tre Television Cup, which has seen intense competition between world class cyclists.

The Hậu Giang native clocked a top speed of 39.253kmh during the 160km race from Vị Thanh City in his home province to Cần Thơ

City, a journey that he completed in 4hr 4.34min.

In this stage Phan Thông Nhân of Cần Thơ and Trần Lê Minh Tuấn of the Army were second and third, respectively.

Though Thái triumphed, his team still trails race leader Military Zone 7 after three stages with a combined time of 29:14.33. Domesco Pharmacy Đồng Tháp 1 and ADC-Vinh Long Television rose to second and third.

Today, 70 racers from 14 premier clubs nationwide continue on to the next leg, a 130km race from Cần Thơ City to Bến Tre City.

Tiền Minh out of Super Series

Viet Nam's top badminton player Nguyễn Tiến Minh lost to Japan's Kenichi Tago 1-2 in the first round of Super Series South Korea Open, which is scheduled to run through January 8.

World No 8 Minh beat his rival 21-19 in the first set, but Tago, ranked 12th, prevailed in the two remaining sets with the results 10-21 and 9-21.

Last year, the 29-year-old was also ejected from this tournament when he was defeated by China's Chen Long.

Minh will compete at the Malaysia Open Super Series 2012 on January 10-15. — VNS

CRICKET

Clarke's 329 leaves India toiling

SYDNEY — Michael Clarke hit a majestic unbeaten 329 before declaring Australia's first innings at 659 for four with a lead of 468 on the third day of the second test against India at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) yesterday.

India, despite facing a fine spell from paceman Ben Hilfenhaus, were 114-2 at the close of play with opener Gautam Gambhir (68) and Sachin Tendulkar, who had made eight from 42 balls, set to resume on day four.

The Australia captain's triple century was just the

25th in test cricket and the fourth highest test score by an Australian. It was also the 14th highest by any batsman and the highest in 100 tests over more than a century at the SCG. More importantly for Australia, with support from Ricky Ponting (134) and Mike Hussey (150 not out), Clarke's innings rescued the hosts from 37-3 and put them in an excellent position to take a 2-0 lead in the four-match series.

Clarke brought up the 300, flicking the ball through midwicket off the bowling of Ishant Sharma for

the 37th four of his innings, becoming the 21st cricketer to reach the milestone.

The righthander whipped off his helmet to acknowledge a standing ovation from the 31,000 crowd at his home ground and pointed towards his team mates in the dressing room. Selflessly passing up the chance to break any more records, Clarke called time on his best test innings a ball after Hussey had reached his 150, leaving his bowlers two-and-a-half days to get the tourists out. —

REUTERS

SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Everton 1 Bolton Wanderers 2
 Newcastle United 3 Manchester United 0

SPANISH KING'S CUP

Last 16 First Leg
 (La Liga unless stated, numerals denote division)
 Real Sociedad 2 Real Mallorca 0
 Barcelona 4 Osasuna 0

TENNIS

(prefix denotes seeding)

QATAR OPEN

Men's Singles, Second Round
 4-Gael Monfils (France) def. Benjamin Becker (Germany) 7-5 4-6 7-5
 2-Roger Federer (Switzerland) def. Grega Zemlja (Slovenia) 6-2 6-3
 7-Mikhail Youzhny (Russia) def. Ivo Karlovic (Croatia) 6-2 6-7 (3) 6-3
 1-Rafa Nadal (Spain) def. Denis Gremelmayr (Germany) 6-2 6-2
 3-Jo-Wilfried Tsonga (France) def. Flavio Cipolla (Italy) 7-6 (8) 6-3
 8-Andreas Seppi (Italy) def. Guillermo Garcia-Lopez (Spain) 7-5 6-3
 5-Viktor Troicki (Serbia) def. Matthias Bachinger (Germany) 7-6 (6) 6-1

AUCKLAND CLASSIC

Women's Singles, Quarter-final
 Zheng Jie (China) def. Lucie Hradecka (Czech Republic) 6-2 6-3

Angelique Kerber (Germany) def. Sabine Lisicki (Germany) 6-4 4-3 (Lisicki retired)
 4-Flavia Pennetta (Italy) def. Elena Vesnina (Russia) 6-2 6-1

BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL

Women's Singles, Quarter-finals
 3-Francesca Schiavone (Italy) def. 6-Jelena Jankovic (Serbia) 5-7 7-6 (2) 6-3
Men's Singles, Quarter-final
 2-Gilles Simon (France) def. Santiago Giraldo (Colombia) 7-6 (2) 6-4

HOPMAN CUP

Group B
 France def. Spain 2-0
 Marion Bartoli (FRA) def. Annabel Medina Garrigues (ESP) 6-2, 6-4
 Men's singles: Richard Gasquet (FRA) def. Fernando Verdasco (ESP) 6-2, 6-4

CRICKET

AUSTRALIA v INDIA

Second Test/Third Day
 India first innings 191 (M.Dhoni 57 not out, J. Paterson 4-43, B. Hilfenhaus 3-51, P. Sidle 3-55)
 Australia first innings (overnight 482-4)
 D. Warner c Tendulkar b Khan 8
 E. Cowan lbw Khan 16
 S. Marsh c Laxman b Khan 0
 R. Ponting c Tendulkar b Sharma 134
 M. Clarke not out 329
 M. Hussey not out 150
Extras (b-2, lb-13, w-4, nb-3) 22
Total (for four wickets dec, 163 overs) 659
Fall of wickets: 1-82 3-93 4-325
Bowling: Z Khan 31-4-123, U Yada 24-2-123 (w-2), Sharma 33-2-144 (nb-1, w-1), R Ashwin 44-5-157 (w-1), V Sehwag 23-1-75 (nb-2), V Kohli 8-0-23-0

Indiesecondinnings

G. Gambhir not out 68
 V. Sehwag c Warner b Hilfenhaus 4
 R. Dravid b Hilfenhaus 29
 S. Tendulkar not out 8
Extras (b-3, w-1, nb-1) 5
Total (for two wickets, 41 overs) 114

Fall of wickets

1-182 100
 Toibet, V. Laxman, V. Kohli, M. Dhoni, R. Ashwin, Z. Khan, I. Sharma, U. Yadav
Bowling (to date): J. Paterson 12-1-40 (w-1, nb-1), B. Hilfenhaus 16-6-37-2, P. Sidle 11-7-23-0, N. Lyon 2-0-11-0
Result: India won the toss and elected to bat. Australia lead the four-match series 1-0.

SOUTH AFRICA v SRI LANKA

Third Test/Second Day
South Africa first innings (overnight 347-3)
 G. Smith b Prasad 16
 A. Petersen c Dhanish b Weledgedara 109
 H. Amla lbw b Prasad 16
 J. Kallis c Mathews b Herath 224
 A. de Villiers not out 160
 J. Rudolph not out 51
Extras (b-1, w-1, nb-2) 4
Total (for four wickets dec, 139 overs) 580
Fall of wickets: 1-25 2-56 3-261 4-453
Did not bat: M. Boucher, V. Philander, D. Steyn, M. Morkel, I. Tahir.
Bowling: Weledgedara 29-7-107-1 (nb-2, w-1), Perera 22-1-131-0, Prasad 30-2-154-2, Mathews 12-0-47-0, Herath 42-4-108-1, Dhanish 4-0-32-0.
Sri Lanka first innings
 L. Thirimanne b Morkel 23
 T. Dhanish c Smith b Tahir 78
 K. Sangakkara not out 35
 M. Jayawardene not out 7

Extras (b-4, lb-1, nb-1) 6
Total (for two wickets, 39 overs) 149
Fall of wickets: 1-70 2-126
Still to bat: T. Samaraweera, A. Mathews, D. Chandimal, D. Prasad, T. Perera, R. Herath, C. Weledgedara.
Bowling: Steyn 12-2-40-0, Philander 10-2-34-0, Morkel 10-2-55-1 (nb-1), Tahir 7-0-15-1

BASKETBALL

NBA

(home team in CAPS)
 ORLANDO 103 Washington 85
 TORONTO 92 Cleveland 77
 Charlotte 118 NY KNICKS 110
 Chicago 99 DETROIT 83
 MIAMI 118 Indiana 83
 BOSTON 89 New Jersey 70
 Memphis 90 MINNESOTA 86
 Philadelphia 101 NEW ORLEANS 93
 DALLAS 98 Phoenix 89
 SAN ANTONIO 101 Golden State 95
 DENVER 110 Sacramento 83
 LA CLIPPERS 117 Houston 89

ICE HOCKEY

NHL

(home team in CAPS)
 MONTREAL 7 Winnipeg 3
 Boston 6 NEW JERSEY 1
 VANCOUVER 3 Minnesota 0
 San Jose 3 ANAHEIM 1

TENNIS

Federer, Nadal ease into Qatar Open quarter-finals

DOHA — Roger Federer extended his winning run to 19 matches with an easy victory at the Qatar Open on Wednesday while longtime rival Rafael Nadal was equally impressive in reaching the quarter-finals.

Federer, seeded second, routed Slovenia's Grega Zemlja 6-2, 6-3 in an hour, dropping just 11 points in nine service games.

"I'm happy to come through matches easily at the beginning of the season, because it can be tricky when you enter the first tournament and right away you play an incredibly tough three setter," Federer said in a post-match news conference.

Top seed Nadal, who took two and a half hours to battle past first-round opponent Philipp Kohlschreiber on Tuesday, was more assured against qualifier Denis Gremelmayr as he strolled to a 6-2, 6-2 win.

The unfancied German had won a solitary game in their only previous meeting and fared little better in windy Doha, Nadal pounding his fellow left-hander from the outset.

Like Federer, Nadal is looking to reclaim the world No 1 spot from Novak Djokovic.

The Qatar tournament is seen by both players as important preparation for this month's Australian Open, the first grand slam of the season, and the Spaniard has changed his approach to try to recapture top form.

"I went to the net a lot of times, that's important. It's something we are trying to do more often," said Nadal.

"I'm trying to return a little bit better, because for me the worst thing that I did last year was the return, especially the second half of the year. My return was worse than usual."

Nadal had been troubled by a shoulder injury for several weeks but there was little sign of this as Gremelmayr, ranked 189 in the world, was forced to save a break point in the opening game.

The German lost his next service game, a poor forehand into the net putting Nadal 2-1 ahead and a break up.

"My goal is to win against the best players in the world."

JOE-WILFRED TSONGA, FRANCE

Serving at 1-3 down, Gremelmayr saved three break points in a game of seven deuces, but the 30-year-old then stabbed a forehand passing shot into the net to give Nadal a fourth opportunity.

The 10-times grand slam winner took it with a thumping forehand the despairing German could only shovel into the net for a double break and a 4-1 lead.

The second set was similar, Nadal breaking immediately as he raced into a 4-0 lead before serving out the set.

French duo Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, seeded third, and Gael Monfils joined them in the last eight.

Tsonga came from a break down and also saved two set points in a first set tiebreak against Flavio Cipolla, eventually defeating the Italian outsider 7-6, 6-3 as he tried a new serve and volley approach he hopes can win him his first grand slam title.

"My goal is to win against the best players in the world," Tsonga said.

"To beat these guys you need to have something different. They all have: Rafa runs a lot, plays with a lot of spin, Roger takes the ball early, Novak too. Andy Murray is an incredible defender and his passing shots are just amazing."

"You need something different to be the best player on court and I think my way is to be really offensive, to play my serve and also volley too."

Fourth seed Monfils overcame Benjamin Becker 7-5, 4-6, 7-5 in a marathon encounter.

The lanky Frenchman, who has slipped to 16th in the world from seventh in September, squandered two match points before overcoming the German.

Monfils took nine attempts to bag the first set, eventually winning it with an audacious curling lob. — **REUTERS**



On form: Svetlana Kuznetsova of Russia reaches the semi-finals of the Auckland Classic after beating Sara Errani of Italy. She will next meet with Zheng Jie from China. — AFP/VNA Photo

Kuznetsova continues to march on in Auckland

WELLINGTON — Former world No 2 Svetlana Kuznetsova cemented her Auckland Classic title credentials with an effortless 6-4, 6-3 victory over Italy's Sara Errani in the quarter-finals yesterday.

The 26-year-old Russian, who looked out of touch 12 months ago when her second round loss extended a year-long dip in form, has returned to Auckland in fine shape and appears intent on exorcising those demons.

The world number 19 dispatched Alison Riske in 75 minutes then destroyed American teenager Christina McHale, who is tipped as a potential top-10 player and had beaten her twice last year, to make the last eight without being stretched.

The 2004 US Open and 2009 French Open champion had been expected to be pushed hard by the fleet-footed Italian but the Russian overpowered her opponent with blistering groundstrokes off both flanks to

set up a semi-final against Zheng Jie. "It was not the best performance from me this week today but still I didn't have my best day and I went out in two sets so that was good," the third seed said in a courtside interview.

Kuznetsova's potential march to the title was also made easier when top seed Sabine Lisicki was forced out of the tournament with an abdominal injury suffered during her quarter-final against fellow German Angelique Kerber.

Lisicki, who has struggled with her timing in a series of mixed performances throughout the week, sought medical attention for the injury after she lost the first set 6-4 and continued to have treatment between games.

The world number 15 lasted until the eighth game of the second set, when she was trailing 4-3, before deciding she could not carry on.

Kerber will meet fourth seed Flavia Pennetta in the semi-finals after the Italian easily accounted

for Russia's Elena Vesnina in the first match yesterday, romping to a 6-2, 6-1 victory in 68 minutes.

The 29-year-old Pennetta never appeared ruffled in the match, making few errors and putting the Russian under constant pressure, clinching victory when her backhand return of serve down the line left Vesnina flatfooted.

"I think today was perfect, I didn't make a lot of mistakes, my serve was working good and I'm really proud of the match," said Pennetta, who on present form represents Kuznetsova's biggest challenge for the title.

"It was a tough matchup, she is a very good player but I played really good."

China's Zheng also seemed to waste little effort in overcoming Lucie Hradecka 6-2, 6-3 in an hour.

"I think the match was amazing for me because it's a new year and this is the first tournament and I'm in the semi-finals, I'm very happy," Zheng said. — **REUTERS**

GOLF

Byrd flies extra high for title defence in Hawaii

LOS ANGELES — Jonathan Byrd will defend a PGA Tour title for a fourth time at this week's season-opening Hyundai Tournament of Champions in Hawaii, but this one feels extra special for the American.

His 2011 victory on the picturesque island of Maui ended a frustrating habit of winning fairly late in the US season and it has made him especially famous in the eyes of his five-year-old son Jackson.

"It's just a good feeling," Byrd said at the Kapalua Resort on Wednesday while preparing for today's opening round in the elite US\$5.6 million event.

"Ever since ... we finally got here

to Maui, seeing the signage up and my son looking at the picture of me pumping my fist. He looked at me and he said, 'Dad, I think you're famous.' I said, 'At least for this week I am.'"

"He's seen my picture all over the place, around the hotel, the golf course, so that's been fun. It doesn't happen that much for most of us mortals so you want to enjoy it."

Byrd won last year's title by beating fellow American Robert Garrigus in a playoff, an unprecedented fast start to a PGA Tour season which he treasured.

"I've always won kind of towards the end of the season, so it was stress-

ful," five-time PGA Tour champion Byrd recalled. "Winning the first tournament of the year, it's like, 'wow.' It really doesn't get much better than that, going to (the) Sony (Open) and you've already won a tournament when 75 per cent of the tour hasn't even played yet."

Only 28 players are competing this week in the event that brings together winners from the previous season and Byrd cherishes the opportunity to get a jump-start on his rivals before next week's Sony Open, the first full-field tournament of the year.

"It's a lot easier to beat 28 guys than it is to beat 144 or 156," he

smiled. "The worst you're going to do is finish 28th, so you've got a top-30 finish at the start of the year."

"I'm trying to have a great week this week but I'm trying to keep it simple. I'm not thinking about winning, I'm thinking about taking care of the things I need to take care of, and hopefully that gets me in contention with nine holes to go."

Several leading players who triumphed on the 2011 PGA Tour have opted not to compete this week for varied reasons ranging from injury and family births to extending their 'off-season'.

Among the notable absentees are British world number one Luke

Donald, Masters champion Charl Schwartzel of South Africa and US Open winner Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland.

American world No 6 Steve Stricker and 10th-ranked compatriot Webb Simpson head this week's field. Keegan Bradley, who won his maiden major title at last year's PGA Championship, is among 12 players making their debuts this week at the Kapalua Resort.

Like every first-time visitor to the par-73 Plantation Course, Bradley has delighted in the spectacular ocean views but was stunned by the layout's elevation changes of 160 feet (49m). — **REUTERS**



FOOTBALL

Fabregas and Messi lead Barca Cup rout

MADRID — Lionel Messi and Cesc Fabregas each scored twice as Barcelona thrilled the Nou Camp with a crushing 4-0 win over Osasuna in their King's Cup last 16 first leg on Wednesday.

The Spanish, European and world champions completely dominated their La Liga rivals, victory made all the sweeter when talisman Messi came off the bench to add two goals to first-half strikes from the former Arsenal captain.

Barca had said Messi would miss the game with flu but the Argentine World Player of the Year was able to replace Pedro for the final half hour against an outclassed Osasuna.

Fabregas, who was at Barca's youth school with Messi before moving to London, put the home side ahead in the 13th minute.

He doubled their lead five minutes later with a fine piece of close control and a sublime chip over goalkeeper Asier Riesgo.

The 24-year-old Fabregas has been in blistering form since returning to the Catalan capital in the close season and thriving in the more advanced role he has been given by coach Pep Guardiola.

Messi netted a rare header from a Fabregas cross 20 minutes from time before picking up a pass from the influential Xavi in added time

and curling a shot into the corner of the net.

"I didn't vomit and there was no fever, I just had a stomachache, nothing more," Messi said in a television interview.

"That's why I couldn't take part in this morning's training but later on I recovered enough to be able to play."

Barring upsets in next week's second legs, Barca face a quarter-final clash with bitter rivals Real Madrid, who beat them 1-0 in last year's final.

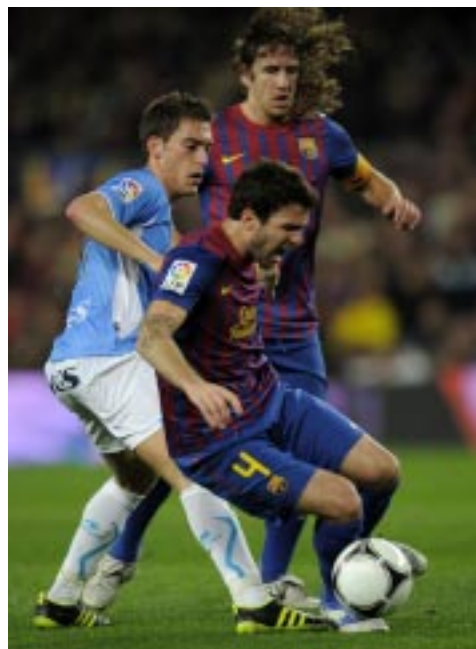
Jose Mourinho's side came back from two goals down to win their last 16 first leg against Malaga 3-2 on Tuesday.

Real Sociedad, King's Cup winners in 1987, took the upper hand against Real Mallorca when they beat the 2003 champions 2-0 at their Anoeta stadium in San Sebastian earlier.

There were surprise results in Tuesday's other three games.

Third-tier Mirandes took a 2-0 lead over visiting Racing Santander, while another Segunda B side, Albacete, drew 0-0 at home to Athletic Bilbao.

Second-division Alcorcon, who eliminated Real Zaragoza at the last 32 stage, snatched a 2-1 win at home to Levante. — REUTERS



Tussle: Barcelona's forward Cesc Fabregas (right) vies with Osasuna's Finnish defender Jukka Raitala during their Spanish Cup at Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP/VNA Photo



High and mighty: Newcastle United's Senegalese striker Demba Ba (right) vies with Manchester United's Phil Jones during their Premier League match in Newcastle upon Tyne. — AFP/VNA Photo

Man United slump to second straight defeat

LONDON — Champions Manchester United suffered a second straight Premier League defeat on Wednesday, losing 3-0 to Newcastle United to leave Manchester City three points clear at the top of the table.

Demba Ba opened the scoring in the first half with his 15th league goal of the season before Yohan Cabaye made it 2-0 in the 47th from a free-kick. A Phil Jones own goal made sure Newcastle stayed seventh and a point behind Liverpool.

United's third defeat in 20 matches so far meant they stayed second on 45 points, only three ahead of third-placed Tottenham Hotspur who have a game in hand.

"It's not the time to panic. We've got the experience to cope with it," said United manager Alex Ferguson, whose team lost 3-2 to Blackburn on New Year's Eve.

Bolton Wanderers shocked Everton 2-1 away from home after Everton goalkeeper Tim Howard had given his side the lead with a freak kick from his own area.

Bolton, who moved move off the bottom to 18th place,

equalised through David Ngog four minutes later with Chelsea transfer target and England defender Gary Cahill scoring the winner 12 minutes from time.

Howard's booming wind-assisted clearance bounced over opposite number Adam Bogdan and was only the fourth goal scored by a goalkeeper since the Premier League was formed in 1992-93. Everton stayed 11th on 24 points with a game in hand on all teams bar Tottenham, while Bolton leapt above Blackburn Rovers and Wigan Athletic on 16 points, only one behind Queens Park Rangers and Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Senegal striker Ba, a revelation for Newcastle this season who will be sorely missed during the January 21-February 12 African Nations Cup, wasted a great chance to put his side in the lead early in the first half but made amends with the brilliantly taken opener.

After a long kick from goalkeeper Tim Krul that was flicked on by Shola Ameobi, Ba flicked the ball right-footed over Rio Ferdinand and United keeper

Anders Lindegaard into the far corner of the net on 33 minutes.

Better was to follow, when two minutes into the second half Cabaye unleashed an unstoppable free kick. Then, with United laying siege to Newcastle's goal, defender Danny Simpson stopped a Wayne Rooney shot on the line to keep the two-goal advantage.

Former United player Simpson did exactly the same from a Javier Hernandez shot when the two sides met in the league in November to prevent a 2-1 home win.

United's miserable night was capped with added time approaching when Jones took his eye off the ball following another huge kick by Krul and headed it onto his leg to wrong-foot Lindegaard.

"We've had such a great season so far without actually turning over one of the top teams," Newcastle manager Alan Pardew said. Ferguson conceded matter-of-factly that rivals City have the advantage in the Premier League title race.

"They won theirs last night and we lost ours, advantage to them of course." — REUTERS